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CONFEDERATE EXILES IN VENEZUELA

*By*

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*and*

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## *Preface*

FIVE DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS, 1866 a group of former Confederates and their families, a total of fifty persons, embarked at St. Louis, Missouri on a 3,000-mile journey to Venezuela. There they endeavored to discover new homes. Within the following four years other small groups of exiles sailed from New Orleans, Charleston, Wilmington, and New York for the same destination, the Price Grant, southeast of the Orinoco River. Their intent, as expressed by one of their leaders, was to establish "a distinctive state government . . . purely Southern in all its characteristics."

Of the various proposals for Confederate settlements abroad after the American Civil War, the colony in Venezuela is probably the least known. Because it is so little known the authors hope by means of this study to stimulate interest in the Venezuelan venture as well as in the post-bellum period generally, where research is urgently needed, especially in treatments of the Confederate expatriation movement.

Actually this monograph is a by-product of research started in 1942 in the National Archives of Mexico on French intervention. Soon we discovered that the Confederate expatriation movement was closely involved in French policy to build up a strong Mexican Empire as a buffer against the United States. In the course of our work in Mexico, France, and elsewhere we have assembled considerable material on Confederate expatriates, not only in Mexico but also in other Latin American areas and in other parts of the world. In time we hope to present these findings in book form also.

The difficulties of locating information about Confederate expatriates have been manifold. Inasmuch as the movement



was not successful, those who took part in it were generally disinclined to write of their failures. Consequently, personal accounts are scarce. Moreover, the material that is available is widely scattered, as a glance at our bibliography will amply testify.

Generous friends and gracious correspondents, many of whom are unknown personally to us, have aided immeasurably in our search for data. To them we are deeply grateful.

*Winter Park, Florida*  
*Summer, 1960*

ALFRED JACKSON HANNA

## CONFEDERATE EXILES IN VENEZUELA



## CHAPTER I

### *Southern Exiles*

AT THE CLOSE OF THE American Civil War Henry Hotze, editor of the London *Index*, a weekly propaganda journal subsidized by the Confederate States of America, stated that "hitherto" European emigration of labor and skill as well as its flow of capital had made the United States "one of the leading powers of the world."<sup>1</sup> But now, he predicted on July 22, 1865, "the most patent fact illustrative of the new history of the Union, is that for the first time its own citizens have become emigrants . . . . Thousands of the best men of the South must, by the nature of things—the mere pressure of circumstances—even without any special or individual prosecution, be driven into exile. Thousands are actually held back only from sheer inability of getting away. . . . With the exception of the very few who have no pecuniary cares, the bulk of these Southern emigrants must seek fortune or a bare livelihood [outside their native land] . . . ."

Although the total number of Southerners who sought "fortune or a bare livelihood" in foreign lands did not much exceed ten thousand, the Confederate exodus of 1865-1870 was the largest expatriation movement in the history of the United States.

The first to go were hundreds of civil and military officials who fled to escape punitive measures. They sought refuge in foreign lands nearest the South, Cuba and Mexico.

<sup>1</sup> See Richard B. Harwell, "The Creed of a Propagandist . . ." *Journalism Quarterly*, XXVIII, 213-218 (Spring, 1951); Burton J. Hendrick, *Statesman of the Lost Cause* (Boston, 1939), 390-399.



Following the assassination of Lincoln numerous Confederates were unjustly accused of complicity in that plot. Large rewards were offered for their capture. Several Northern editors demanded the death penalty for them and for many other high-ranking officials of the Confederacy.

A second group of Southerners, veterans of four years of war and unwilling to return to their devastated countryside, left their homes for adventure abroad.

A third group, by far the largest, quit the South because they had lost hope of prosperity and were determined not to accept the new order of political, social and economic life being forced upon them. Their conviction was expressed by W. W. Legaré of South Carolina when he declared,

Recent occurrences in the political world are fast driving us to the conclusion, that we cannot look upon this country as *ours* much longer. Our best men are disfranchised, Negroes are put into power, the vilest scum of society is to be allowed to hold office, and we can entertain no hope that our State will recover from the shock for *many years*. The South is to become another Poland or Ireland—ruled by despotic *strangers* who can have no sympathy with us.

Poverty is upon us and poverty is our only expectation for years. We shall be made to pay a large portion of the enormous debt contracted by the United States for our conquest, and we shall be called on yearly for contributions out of our hard earnings for the benefit of our enemies—to keep us in subjection to the passions of the lowest order of society, and to support lazy Negroes and low lived whites. The chivalric spirit of the Southerner cannot consent to the rule of such forces; life in this country, *without submission*, will scarcely be supportable or desirable . . . .<sup>2</sup>

This was definitely the attitude of Matthew Fontaine Maury, a former officer of the United States Navy. On a Confederate mission in Europe as the war closed, he was warned by friends he would be arrested if he returned to Virginia. Heeding this advice, he went to Mexico where in

<sup>2</sup> A circular issued at Orangeburg, S. C., Aug. 1, 1867 (in University of South Carolina Library, Columbia).

early September, 1865 he became head of the Emperor Maximilian's immigration program for the Mexican Empire. In this position he encouraged emigrants from all lands to enter Mexico, but his particular ambition was to establish in that country a "New Virginia."<sup>3</sup>

On Maury's staff as editor of the *Mexican Times*, an English-language newspaper and virtually a Confederate organ, was General Henry W. Allen, former Confederate governor of Louisiana. In that paper, November 11, 1865, Allen answered the question "Why are there any Confederates in Mexico?" as follows:

These gallant and distinguished gentlemen now in Mexico were told that they would be arrested and cast into a loathsome prison, there to be held for future humiliation and punishment. A reward in the public newspapers had already been offered for one of them. The Governors east of the Mississippi River had been seized and although one of them had been most terribly wounded, still they were all thrust into the felon's cell. Those gentlemen who lived mostly in the Trans-Mississippi Department reasonably expected the same treatment. They were, therefore, driven out from their native land, from their homes and firesides, their wives and children, and sought a shelter in Mexico, the only place of retreat left to them.

A land office for immigrants was established under General John B. Magruder. Confederate engineers initiated a system of surveys and other Confederates were appointed agents to locate prospective settlers who were entering Mexico from Texas and elsewhere.

Maury's appeal for the creation of a new life in Mexico was seriously handicapped by the growing sentiment that Southerners should not abandon their native land in its humiliation and distress, but should work for a new era of prosperity and social health. This conviction was held by many editors in Richmond, Charleston, Raleigh, Mobile

<sup>3</sup> A. J. Hanna, "The Role of Matthew Fontaine Maury in the Mexican Empire," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LV, 105-125 (Apr., 1947).



and other cities. The New Orleans *Picayune* deeply regretted "the disposition manifested by many to leave their native land and to remit to others the duty of saving something from the wreck of independence and of protecting the weak, defenceless and impoverished."<sup>4</sup> *DeBow's Review*, agreeing "heartily with some of the leaders of the South such as Lee, Johnston, Hampton and others, that it is the duty of her sons to remain in the country . . . discouraged all schemes of emigration to Brazil or to Mexico, especially since the promulgation of the liberal policy of President Johnson."<sup>5</sup>

In declining Maury's invitation to settle in Mexico, Robert E. Lee wrote: "I prefer to struggle for its [the South's] restoration, and share its fate rather than give up all as lost." The rejection of his efforts amazed and disillusioned Maury who had planned to appoint friends and kinsmen as agents to recruit colonists for "New Virginia" in Mexico. His sharp comment was: "I am now in the way of knowing the disposition of our people through the humble pie-eaters of Virginia."<sup>6</sup>

Some Mexicans, who had at first welcomed immigrants, changed their opinions once they observed the Confederate migration mounting into thousands. Landowners blocked surveys which were likely to restrict their uncultivated holdings. Moreover, as the Republicans under Benito Juárez steadily made progress in their struggle against Maximilian's Imperialists backed by the French Army, the domain that had been opened to Confederates not only rapidly receded but also fell under threat of attack. Finally, when the French minister to Mexico pointed out to Maximilian that the favoring of Confederate immigration would destroy all hope of gaining recognition from the United States, the uninspired Emperor decided to double-cross Southerners by discontinuing the program. By that time, February, 1866, Maury had become so discouraged over bureaucratic delays and inefficiencies that he secured per-

<sup>4</sup> Apr. 24, 1867.

<sup>5</sup> 2, I, 108 (Jan., 1866).

<sup>6</sup> Hanna, LV, 119-120 (Apr., 1947).

mission to visit his family in England. He never returned to Mexico. By June, 1867, when Maximilian was executed, the vast majority of Confederates had left Mexico for other countries or had returned to their homes in the South.<sup>7</sup>

As Southerners were abandoning Mexico, other groups, chiefly in Louisiana and Mississippi, sought new homes in British Honduras, on the Yucatan Peninsula where little cultural or language barriers were evident. Former Confederates made the trip from New Orleans to Belize on the mail steamer *Trade Winds*, about fifty passengers per month for a considerable part of the 1867-1869 period. Relatively successful in the growing of sugar, cattle and bananas, these expatriates usually sent their children to the United States for schooling and to keep them apart from the Negro population which in numbers dominated British Honduras. Estimates of the total number of Confederates who made this area their home vary from 300 to 1,000. When the price of sugar dropped in the early 1890's, many of them grew discouraged and returned home. A few entered the mahogany business. The experiment was not a success, generally speaking.<sup>8</sup>

Southern interest in countries to the south of the United States has been attributed by Lawrence F. Hill to the filibustering expeditions of Southerners to Latin America in the 1840's and 1850's and to the writings of Matthew Fontaine Maury who, in spite of politics, was respected throughout the United States as an astronomer and hydrographer.<sup>9</sup> Maury had described the wonders of the Amazon Valley in *DeBow's Review*, the *National Intelligencer*, and the *Southern Literary Messenger*. He had popularized his ideas on the great potentialities of South America through Southern conventions which adopted and printed his memorials. According to Hill, this "largely romantic, this

<sup>7</sup> Kathryn A. Hanna, "The Roles of the South in the French Intervention in Mexico," *Journal of Southern History*, XX, 3-21 (Feb., 1954).

<sup>8</sup> Desmond Holdridge, "Toledo; a Tropical Refuge Settlement in British Honduras," *Geographical Review*, XXX, 376-393 (July, 1940); New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Apr. 30, 1867; A. R. Gibbs, *British Honduras* . . . (London, 1883), 151-152.

<sup>9</sup> *Confederate Exodus to Latin America* (Austin, 1936), 5-7.



ante-bellum interest of the South in the tropics carried over to post-war days when it was transformed into practicability. The transforming force was the state of complete desperation that came over the South following the surrender at Appomattox."<sup>10</sup>

In Portuguese America former Confederates, as a group, achieved expatriation more successfully than in Spanish America. This may have been due to the careful and extensive investigation of conditions in Brazil made by promoters prior to the embarkation of colonists for that far-away land. Among those who investigated conditions at first hand was a Confederate veteran, the Reverend Ballard S. Dunn, rector of St. Phillip's Church in New Orleans. Upon his return to the South he wrote *Brazil, the Home for Southerners* for the benefit of "such Southerners as are seriously contemplating expatriation from manly motives."<sup>11</sup> In Brazil, Confederates engaged in farming and stock raising; a number followed the professions of dentistry, medicine and engineering. Villa Americana in the hinterland of Sao Paulo was for a time a thriving community of several hundred Confederates. Other colonies included one on the Amazon. Of the approximately four thousand Southerners who sought homes in Brazil, the major portion remained less than five years. One permanent contribution they made to Brazil was to strengthen Methodist and Presbyterian church work there.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the best known and most successful Confederate expatriate was Judah P. Benjamin, former Secretary of State. In the spring of 1865 he eluded Federal pursuers down the west coast of Florida to Cuba and proceeded to England. There he achieved pronounced success at the bar. The London *Times* declared his life was as varied as an oriental tale.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>11</sup> (New Orleans, 1866), i.

<sup>12</sup> Blanche H. C. Weaver, "Confederate Immigrants and Evangelical Churches in Brazil," *Journal of Southern History*, XVIII, 446-468 (Nov., 1952).

<sup>13</sup> May 9, 1884. See A. J. Hanna, *Flight into Oblivion* (Richmond, 1938), 194-208.

Equally arresting were the experiences abroad of William W. Loring of Florida. A colonel in the United States Army in the Mexican War, he served with distinction as major general in the Confederate Army. He became general of a division in the Egyptian Army, took part in the Egyptian expedition against Abyssinia and participated in the Battle of Kaya-kohn. In recognition of this service, Loring was elevated by the Khedive to the dignity of a Pasha and decorated with the Orders of the Osmanli and of the Medjilie.<sup>14</sup>

Among other Egyptian Confederates was Doctor Edward Warren, a North Carolinian who served as a surgeon in the Egyptian Army. Earlier, he had been a surgeon in the Army of Northern Virginia and a practicing physician in Paris. When he returned to Baltimore to resume his pre-war practice, he found himself "dispossessed by my chair [in the medical college], bereft of my property, forgotten by my pupils, ignored by my friends, and with everything around and before me covered with the blight and gloom of December."<sup>15</sup>

Another notable example of expatriation was the famous commander of the Confederate cruiser, *Stonewall*, Thomas J. Page. As a United States naval officer he had participated in the explorations of the La Plata region in South America in the 1850's and had become involved in a serious controversy with Dictator Carlos Antonio Lopez of Paraguay. For a time after the American Civil War Page lived on a cattle ranch in Argentina. He was then engaged by Argentina to superintend the construction in England of four ironclads. He died in Rome at the age of ninety-two.<sup>16</sup>

Another Virginian who served in both the United States and Confederate navies and who after the war distinguished himself abroad was Rear Admiral John R. Tucker. Known as "Handsome Jack," he commanded the *Stromboli* in the Mexican War. For the Confederacy he fought in the Battle

<sup>14</sup> *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1933), XI, 420-421.

<sup>15</sup> *A Doctor's Experiences in Three Continents* (Baltimore, 1885), 356.

<sup>16</sup> *DAB*, XIV, 140-141.



of Hampton Roads, leading the Charleston Squadron. After he was released from Fort Warren, he was appointed rear admiral of the Peruvian Navy. He saw service along the Pacific coast against the Spanish Navy when he was made chief admiral of both the Peruvian and Chilean naval forces. Later, he headed a Peruvian expedition which surveyed the headwaters of the Amazon River and thus contributed to scientific knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to the successful Confederate expatriates, the majority failed in their aspirations, however. Some were murdered, some died of disease and a very small number remained expatriates. As E. Merton Coulter has written, "Most of the expatriates ultimately returned, some being forced to ask aid of the hated government they had disowned."

Of the Confederates who selected Venezuela as the country in which to "reconstruct" themselves, Coulter's statement is unquestionably true. Indeed, their project may be described as both unsuccessful and tragic. They reaped nothing but disappointment, from first to last. Certainly, their movement was far more spectacular and imaginative than efficacious as a remedy for Southern ills.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX, 33-34; U. S. State Department, *Dispatches from Peru*, XXI (in National Archives, Washington, as are all other official dispatches hereinafter cited, unless otherwise indicated).

<sup>18</sup> *The South During Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1947), 184.

## CHAPTER II

### *Promoters of the Price Grant*

FIRST, LAST, AND CHIEF PROMOTER of a Confederate settlement in Venezuela was Doctor Henry Manore Price. How he conceived such a proposal and, by September 13, 1865, succeeded in launching a plan for it, is unknown.

If Price waited until the close of the Civil War to negotiate with Venezuelan officials, he obviously worked rapidly and with the utmost energy. One explanation is that he met the Venezuelan minister to the United States through Senator Thomas S. Martin of Virginia. But in 1864 Martin was an eighteen-year-old cadet at the Virginia Military Institute and did not, until 1895, become a senator. Hence, he was hardly a contributor to the inception of Price's negotiations.

According to available sources, some of them questionable, Price was born in Petersburg, Virginia about 1821. His father was Major Henry Price of England, who had immigrated to Virginia shortly after the Battle of Waterloo and married Nancy Daves of Mecklenburg County. Their son was reared and educated in Virginia. How he acquired the title of doctor is not known.<sup>1</sup>

At the age of twenty-four Price was at Forsyth, Georgia, editing the *Southern Medical Reformer*. Two years later,

<sup>1</sup> Miss Francais E. Price, granddaughter of Dr. Price, to A. J. Hanna, July 9, 1948. Edgar Woods, *History of Albemarle County of Virginia* (Charlottesville, 1901), 298, states that Price's father, a tailor, was a native of Stockport, Eng. and that his sister, Rebecca, married Christopher Hornsey. Neither the University of Virginia nor Hampden-Sydney College, which Price allegedly attended, has a record of his having been there.



in 1847, he moved that publication to Petersburg,<sup>2</sup> where he became a member of a group which chartered the Scientific Eclectic Medical Institute. This institute was conducted by Price and Doctor C. J. Kenworthy who, according to the Richmond *Enquirer*, delivered "a course of lectures . . . upon the Thomsonian or Eclectic Practice of Medicine . . .," embracing "Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, Surgery, Theory and Practice of Medicine, Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children, Therapeutics, Materia Medica, Chemistry, Pharmacy, Medical Botany and Forensic Medicine." Price and Kenworthy also established a "Botanico Medical Infirmary" and announced that they were prepared "to meet all persons afflicted with chronic, and supposed incurable forms of disease." A "Botanic Medicine Store" advertised repeatedly that "Dr. Price's Ague and Fever Pills are warranted to cure Ague and Fever in from twenty to thirty hours. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Probably, Price entered the Confederate Army at the beginning of the war. At any rate, on April 17, 1862 he was transferred from Company K, 44th Virginia Infantry and promoted to captain, Company G, 19th Battalion, Virginia Artillery. He was wounded and lost the use of his right hand, whether permanently or not, is not clear. His company fought at Drewry's Bluff.<sup>4</sup> After the war he published a description of one of the campaigns.<sup>5</sup>

Among promoters of the Price Grant drawn from the Confederate Army none was more eminent than John G. Walker. A native of Missouri and a son of the treasurer of that state, Walker attended the Jesuit college which later became Saint Louis University. At the age of twenty-five he was appointed a lieutenant in the United States Army; one year later he was promoted to a captaincy for

<sup>2</sup> *Index-Catalogue of the Library of the Surgeon-General's Office . . .* (Washington, 1880-1948), 1, XI, 647.

<sup>3</sup> W. B. Blanton, *Medicine in Virginia in the Nineteenth Century* (Richmond, 1933), 8, 197.

<sup>4</sup> Confederate Register, Co. K, 44th Regiment and Battery B, 19th Battalion, both of Fluvanna County, Va.

<sup>5</sup> "Rich Mountain in 1861," *Southern Historical Society Papers*, XXVII, 38-44 (Jan., 1899).

gallant and meritorious conduct in the War with Mexico in the course of which he was wounded. Until 1861 he served with the United States Army in California, Florida, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oregon and Texas. Upon his resignation he was appointed a major in the Confederate Army. Early the next year he was advanced to the rank of brigadier general and late in 1862 he was raised to the rank of major general. He was again wounded and in 1865 was in Texas.<sup>6</sup> From Texas Walker accompanied General Henry W. Allen to Mexico.<sup>7</sup> After a brief stay in that country he and his family went to England.<sup>8</sup>

Walker's appointment "as a Director and as Agent" of the Venezuela Company was written by Price in an undated note on a copy of the first broadside of that company. In this note Price wrote, "Mr. Ribas will give you a letter to the Minister at St. James [London]; also, communicate with you authoritatively as to the grant."<sup>9</sup> So far, no record of Walker's promotional activities for the Price Grant has been discovered. His address in London was 150 Leadenhall Street.<sup>10</sup>

In November-December, 1866 Walker was at the Southern Hotel, St. Louis.<sup>11</sup> While there he may possibly have had some connection with the recruiting of Confederate colonists for Venezuela. On January 5, 1867 the New Orleans *Picayune* reported that "Mrs. Mary de Caulp has appeared as agent for the Southern states for a Venezuelan emigration company of which Mr. John Walker of St. Louis is President. During the War she fought for the Confederacy as Lieutenant Bufort until her sex was discovered. Bufort was a member of a Texas calvary regiment. She

<sup>6</sup> F. B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the U. S. Army 1789-1903* (Washington, 1903), II, 179, 184; Joseph P. Blessington, *Campaigns of Walker's Texas Division* (New York, 1875), 72-74.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah A. Dorsey, *Recollections of Henry Watkins Allen* (New York, 1866), 307-310.

<sup>8</sup> Mexico City *Mexican Times*, Dec. 2, 1865.

<sup>9</sup> This note on the broadside was lent the authors by Mr. Stephen Decatur, Garden City, New York.

<sup>10</sup> *Metropolitan Record and New York Vindicator*, March 30, 1867.

<sup>11</sup> Gen. William Preston to Gen. Walker, Dec. 2, 1866 (Preston Family Papers [copies], Library of Congress, Washington).



was arrested by Butler, escaped to Richmond and claimed she went to Europe as a purchasing agent for the Confederate Government."

This woman was Loreta Janeta Velasquez, a New Orleans girl of Cuban extraction who, as Lieutenant Harry T. Bufort, claimed to have raised a battalion of troops in Arkansas, fought in the battles of Ball's Bluff and Manassas, participated in the defense of Forts Donelson and Pillow, and to have been wounded at Shiloh.<sup>12</sup>

As soon as this newspaper story reached Scottsville, Virginia, headquarters of the Venezuela Company, the Reverend John A. Doll sent to the *Picayune* a statement in which he declared that Mrs. de Caulp was not the agent in New Orleans of the Venezuela Company, but that Benjamin P. Van Court was. Doll's inference was that Walker knew nothing of her claims.<sup>13</sup>

Not much has come to light about Doll as a promoter of the Price Grant. He was listed in a New York newspaper as a member of the Venezuela Company's Court of Directory and agent for Maryland and Virginia.<sup>14</sup> He was also announced as a director of the American, English and Venezuelan Trading and Commercial Company as well as director of stores and emigration at Puerto Las Tablas, Venezuela.<sup>15</sup> There is no evidence to indicate that he ever went to Venezuela or that he discharged any duties in the firm. He was a minister of the Gospel at Scottsville and at one time mayor of that Virginia town.<sup>16</sup> Since Scottsville was Price's home after the war, he and Doll were apparently friends.

Others listed with Price, Walker, and Doll at various times as officers, directors, members of the Court of Directory, members of the Executive Council and agents

<sup>12</sup> F. B. Simkins and J. W. Patton, *Women of the Confederacy* (Richmond, 1936), 80-81.

<sup>13</sup> Jan. 28, 1867.

<sup>14</sup> *Metropolitan Record* . . . , March 30, 1867.

<sup>15</sup> *Emigrant's Vade-Mecum, or Guide to the "Price Grant" in Venezuelan Guyana* (London, 1868), inside back cover (hereinafter *Vade-Mecum*).

<sup>16</sup> Miss Irene E. Briggs, granddaughter of Jacob H. Briggs, to A. J. Hanna, July 21, 1959.

of the several companies formed to advance the Confederate settlement in Venezuela may have had little or nothing to do with the undertaking. Some of them appear to have been selected by Price at random. Among these alleged promoters was Doctor Alfred Addison Blandy, a Britisher who prior to 1863 resided in the United States. Because of Union hostility to him he moved to Brazil and became acting British consul at Belem.<sup>17</sup> Others were Christopher Hornsey, of Virginia, Price's brother-in-law and associate in chartering the Scientific Eclectic Medical Institute; Senator Robert R. Collier,<sup>18</sup> Samuel S. Anderson, Octavius Goodrich, Colonel James Hutchinson, James W. Mason, Jacob H. Briggs, John Randolph Tucker, the well-known naval officer—all of Virginia; Major Alex W. Harris and Richard Goodwin of Tennessee; Major Aug. W. Burton of North Carolina; and Kenneth Rayner who, according to *DeBow's Review*, was "known to the entire country."<sup>19</sup> Rayner represented North Carolina in Congress, 1839-1845, and in 1848 almost received the nomination for Vice President. In 1866 his *Life and Times of Andrew Johnson* was published anonymously.<sup>20</sup>

Another promoter who had been much in the news just prior to the outbreak of the Civil War was Colonel Antoine F. Rudler of Augusta, Georgia. Second in command of William Walker's last expedition to Central America, Rudler attempted to smuggle men and supplies through British Honduras to support Walker who in August, 1860 was en route to Nicaragua. Rudler's guns were confiscated and, after he and his men joined Walker, all were arrested by British forces. Rudler was sentenced to be shot with Walker but instead was imprisoned and, after a few months, released.<sup>21</sup> Rudler returned to Georgia, entered the Con-

<sup>17</sup> British Embassy to A. J. Hanna, Washington, Jan. 2, 1958.

<sup>18</sup> Petersburg (Va.) *Daily Index*, March 4, 1870.

<sup>19</sup> 2, I, 108 (Jan., 1866).

<sup>20</sup> *DAB*, XV, 416-417.

<sup>21</sup> T. Conn Bryan, *Confederate Georgia* (Athens, 1954), 18; Laurence Greene, *Filibuster, the Career of William Walker* (Indianapolis, 1937), 317-325; New Orleans *Picayune*, Sept. 27, 1860; New York *Herald*, Oct. 4, 1860; Augusta (Ga.) *Daily Chronicle and Sentinel*, Apr. 16, Oct. 2, 1861, Aug. 9, 1871.



federate Army and served as a colonel. There seems to be no record of his having actually promoted the Venezuela project, but he was in correspondence with Price on the subject and was listed as an agent. Other promoters active in Price's plan were Captain Frederick A. Johnson, Colonel Richard H. Musser, Benjamin P. Van Court, James Leslie Clark, and James Frederick, and Amanda Pattison.

Seemingly, the most articulate of the Price Grant promoters was Colonel J. F. Belton, who was listed a member of the Executive Council of the Venezuela Company and who accompanied Price to Venezuela in the spring of 1867.<sup>22</sup>

Although the St. Louis *Times* stated that Belton was "well-known through the South,"<sup>23</sup> few facts about him are extant. A cousin of General Edmund Kirby Smith, he was a veteran of the Mexican War. When the Civil War broke out, he was working for the Federal government in New York. He left his large family there and entered the Confederate Army. For the major part of the war he was an aide to his distinguished kinsman. Immediately after the war he returned to his family in Brooklyn.<sup>24</sup>

But the United States suited Belton no longer.

I have no home [he wrote his cousin, Mrs. Cassie S. Smith] but I have a country dearer to me now in the hour of adversity—fettered as she is—than is her proudest days of triumph. . . . My principles are unchanged even though the body be crushed. Do not bid me pretend to be a good Union man. I dispise [*sic*] the so called 'Union.' I wish no league with fiends and fanatics such as I believe the Yankee to be. I am not a citizen of the so called United States, owe them no allegiance and never will. You know I am not given to dissembling. What I think and feel will show itself.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Metropolitan Record* . . . , March 30, 1867.

<sup>23</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 126-127.

<sup>24</sup> J. H. Parks, *General Edmund Kirby Smith, C.S.A.* (Baton Rouge, 1954), *passim*. Belton attended West Point, had difficulties there, and appears to have changed his first name. A search of the New York post office and customs records of 1860 revealed no information about him.

<sup>25</sup> J. F. B. to "My dear Cousin" (Mrs. Cassie S. Smith), Aug. 18, 1865 (in Edmund Kirby Smith Papers, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill).

Nevertheless, money was needed for expatriation and Belton had none. His friends urged him to settle in New York, but his wife who was "unlike most of her sex—a sensible woman," understood the necessity of his leaving the country. In such a state of mind, Belton espoused the Price Grant, throwing his energies wholeheartedly into its promotion. By November 23, 1866 he was corresponding with Confederates about the project with enthusiasm and vigor, not at all hampered by lack of facts. Proudly, he wrote as one who had witnessed "the glare of the first shell which hurtled against the walls" of Fort Sumter, one who had escaped "surrender until the last flag was furled beyond the waters of the Mississippi." He was convinced that emigration was inevitable, if Southerners were to "escape from the persecution of a race, i.e., the Yankee, which . . . with the malignant vindictiveness of fiends, now pursue them. . . ."

Belton noted that expatriation had engaged the attention of the Southern people "immediately upon the surrender of our armies. Mexico and Brazil were then the two principal points toward which the defeated Confederates turned in their despair. But without organization and means, it was vain for isolated individuals to expect a full realization of their hopes in either country." Now, however, in the proposed Confederate state within Venezuela, Belton asserted, "We can thus preserve our distinctive characteristics, retain our political institutions in their purity and power, and become a nation once more, virtuous and prosperous, our race uncontaminated by admixture with inferior blood, and our offspring uncorrupted by association with the despicable rabble of reformers which the fate of war has let upon us here. The hand of Divine Providence which had failed to sustain us in our terrible struggle for independence seems now to point the way to our deliverance."

This deliverance, Belton fervently believed, lay in the establishment of a Confederate colony on the Price Grant in the State of Guyana and the Territory of Amazonas, Venezuela, South America.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *Metropolitan Record* . . . , Dec. 1, 1866 (in *Vade Mecum*, 113-116).



In mid-Nineteenth Century Venezuela civil strife was unusually virulent. Operating in a sparsely-populated country and one separated by the handicaps of geography, local chieftains developed rare skill in tearing the Republic apart with no more apparent purpose than advancing themselves and their supporters. The main factions bore the labels of Conservatives and Liberals and the main issue was Centralism versus Federalism, although it was a question how well either issue was understood. Certainly, the factions themselves found no difficulty in combining, when advantages lured the leaders sufficiently.<sup>27</sup>

The year 1863 witnessed the triumph of the Liberals after the four-year Federal War. Juan C. Falcon became President and Antonio Guzman Blanco Vice-President. The next year a new constitution was established for the United States of Venezuela, dividing the country into twenty states, a Federal district (Caracas) and two territories (Coagira and Amazonas). The National Congress consisted of a Chamber of Deputies, elected by the people, and a Senate chosen by the legislatures of the states. A Federal court system was provided. Additional popular rights were universal suffrage, freedom of the press and the abolition of the death penalty.

But Falcon proved to be no stalwart champion of the people. He soon delegated his authority to Guzman Blanco while he remained on his estates at Coro. Distrust grew between the two men, fanned by Guzman Blanco's opposition to Falcon's desire to change the constitution in order to serve a second term. When the Vice-President left Venezuela in 1867 for a mission in Europe, Conservatives in coalition with disgruntled Liberals overthrew Falcon and reseatd former President Jose Tadeo Monagas. The new executive died a few months later; he was succeeded by his nephew, Ruperto Monagas.<sup>28</sup>

This uneasy alliance crumbled when Guzman Blanco re-

<sup>27</sup> William B. and Amy L. Marsland, *Venezuela Through Its History* (New York, 1954), 194.

<sup>28</sup> George S. Wise, *Caudillo, A Portrait of Antonio Guzman Blanco* (New York, 1951), 52, 69.

turned home to make himself the rallying point for Liberals. Civil strife erupted again between the "Blues" and the "Yellows," the colors of the flags of Conservatives and Liberals, respectively. The "Yellows" took Caracas in April, 1870 but peace did not return to Venezuela until 1871, by which time Guzman Blanco was well in the saddle.

The era of the Price enterprise seeking to stimulate immigration fell in this period of turmoil and strife. No matter how great the eulogy of Liberalism and the new constitution, performance spoke for itself and belied all praise. The right to vote meant nothing. The creation of twenty federated states merely gave the local caudillos increased opportunity to do as they pleased. The Falcon administration displayed complete impotence.<sup>29</sup>

The locale of the Price enterprise was the State of Guyana and the Territory of Amazonas, roughly about half of Venezuela. Guyana had been a lure since the days of Sir Walter Raleigh. It stretched from the Atlantic south of the Orinoco to the west and included portions of Venezuela, Brazil and the three colonies by that name of the British, French and Dutch. The State of Guyana was the Venezuela share of this region: today it includes the State of Bolivar and the Territory of Amacuras. To the south of Guyana lay the Territory of Amazonas.

The right bank of the Orinoco is a continuation of the llanos, flat grass-lands that are warm but salubrious during the dry seasons, November to April. When the rains come, April to November, they are subject to floods, fevers, and tropical ailments. Rising from this narrow strip along the river bank are the Guyana highlands, a heavily forested plateau, often a jungle, that reach to the Brazilian frontier and contain mountain ranges of some height.<sup>30</sup>

Dominating Guyana, the Orinoco, one of the three largest rivers of South America, twists and turns its course of 1,500 miles of which 1,000 are navigable. Columbus wrote Queen Isabel of Spain that this great waterway was the

<sup>29</sup> Marsland, 199-200.

<sup>30</sup> See A. Curtis Wilgus, *The Development of Hispanic America* (New York, 1941), 527-528, for two topographical maps.



gateway to the celestial paradise. Bolivar predicted that Angostura, now Ciudad Bolivar, located 250 miles from its mouth, would be the great port of South America.<sup>31</sup> Alexander von Humboldt described it as "one of the most majestic rivers of the New World. . . . [It] is so broad that the mountains . . . appear to rise from the water as if seen above the horizon of the sea."<sup>32</sup> One hundred and twenty miles from the Atlantic the Orinoco Delta begins, stretching along the coast for 165 miles. There are some fifty mouths, but the principal opening for ships is Boca de Navios or Boca Grande. Four hundred and thirty-six tributaries flow into the Orinoco and, of these, two large rivers extending to the south are the Caroni, east of Ciudad Bolivar, and the Caura, farther west. The Orinoco and its tributaries provided the means of transportation for the regions they drain until contemporary times. Even communications between Caracas and Ciudad Bolivar, the only city of any size along the Orinoco, came by boat around the coast and up the river.

In the Fifteenth Century settlement penetrated the edges of Guyana whose interior was known as the "wild country." San Thome de la Guyana was in existence on the Caroni in 1596. The Dutch West India Company established a fort on the Essequibo as early as 1626 and Dutch ships traded along the coast. The Treaty of Munster, 1648, recognized the settlements of both the Spanish and the Dutch, and without fixing a boundary between them. During the Eighteenth Century Spain pushed a mission expansion out from San Thome de la Guyana until an Indian uprising drove them back around 1750. Meanwhile, British and French entrepreneurs interested themselves in the region.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> William H. Gray, "Steamboat Transportation on the Orinoco," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XXV, 455 (Nov., 1945).

<sup>32</sup> *Personal Narrative and Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America* . . . (London, 1881), II, 174, 176.

<sup>33</sup> Franklin Jameson, "Report on the Spanish and Dutch Settlements Prior to 1648"; George L. Burr, "Report on the Territorial Rights of the Dutch West India Company" and "Report on the Spanish Occupation and Claims in Guiana," U. S. 55 Cong., 2 Sess., *Senate Doc. 91; Report and Accompanying Papers of the United States Commission . . . [on] the Divisional Line Between the Republic of Venezuela and British Guiana* (Washington, 1897), II, 371ff., 354ff., 377ff.

In 1814 Great Britain received part of the Dutch holdings in Guyana out of which British Guyana was created, still with no fixed northern boundary. As a matter of fact the whole area was vacant save for a sparse population along the Orinoco and an equally sparse settlement along the coastline of British Guyana.

From the early days of the independence movement, Venezuela attempted to promote commerce along the Orinoco, despite the fact that "all that many a creole enjoyed along its banks was a gun, a hammock, a woman, and a fever." Since 1817 the Orinoco, from its mouth to Ciudad Bolivar, has been open to navigation by foreign ships. In 1847 a lighthouse ship was stationed at Boca Grande. Too poor to service its own river, especially with the advent of steamboats, the Venezuelan government granted concessions for steamboat transportation to foreigners. An Englishman, James Hamilton, received the first contract in 1813. He did not fulfill his agreement and a fine was levied against him in 1816.

During the 1840's American interests received concessions beginning with Vespasian Ellis, who had been chargé d'affaires of the United States legation in Caracas. The Ellis concession formed the basis for the Orinoco Steamship Company of New York. After its rights had been cancelled for non-performance, identical privileges were granted to Edward A. Turpin of Louisville, Kentucky, and Frederick A. Bellen of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. These gentlemen combined with the Orinoco Steamship Company to form a new organization called the Orinoco Steam Navigation Company which started operating in 1849 and continued for sixteen years.<sup>34</sup>

As necessary as transportation was increased population. The wars of liberation and the ensuing civil strife successfully eliminated large numbers of Venezuelans and left properties abandoned and lands uncultivated. Augustin Codazzi estimated that 68 per cent of Venezuelan land was unclaimed in 1839 and, of this, 79 per cent was in

<sup>34</sup> Gray, XXV, 455-461 (Nov., 1945).



Guyana. The government continuously supported the principle of colonization, apparently quite oblivious of the fact that its own economics and political gyrations were the worst deterrents of the project.

Gestures intended to entice immigrants were made as early as 1823, when Colombia and Venezuela were still combined into one state. After Venezuela broke away in 1830, the immigration policy was perpetuated in a law of June 13, 1831. From time to time, as the years passed, modification of laws tried to improve the nation's chances of filling her vacant spaces with laborers and farmers. The pattern for new colonies was usually the same, a grant of land and a subsidy to contractors committed to bringing in settlers.

A modest and fluctuating flow of immigration resulted; some years it increased to several thousands; in others it dropped to hundreds. Between 1810 and 1860, while millions of people were emigrating from Europe, only 12,978 were recorded as having entered Venezuela. The Canary Islands, Spain, France, Germany, and England were the principal countries of origin. A society in London sent two groups; one settled on the coast of Guyana and the other on the Gulf of Paria, but they soon became discouraged and moved to Trinidad. Around 1853 Jorge N. Des Sources, a resident of Trinidad, projected a settlement on the Orinoco River. Isaac Nevett, chargé d'affaires of the United States legation in Caracas, took umbrage at this enterprise, fearing that British possession of the area so near British Guyana would inevitably follow. Venezuela must have shared his apprehension, because an executive decree forbade admitting the immigrants and the Governor of Guyana was ordered to report at once whether any person had already arrived.<sup>35</sup>

Citizens of the United States were not among the colonists who tried out the fortunes of Venezuela in the 1850's, although they would doubtless have been welcome. At least one envoy to Washington hoped for success along this line.

<sup>35</sup> Wayne D. Rasmussen, "Agricultural Colonization and Immigration in Venezuela, 1810-1860," *Agricultural History*, XXI, 159-161 (July, 1947).

Meanwhile, various newspapers in the United States printed items depicting opportunities in the great river basins of South America, among them that of the Orinoco. The North American public was not unaware of the potentialities of this land to the south and its need for a growing population.<sup>36</sup>

During the first years of the American Civil War Venezuela realized how profitable cotton growing could become in Guyana. On November 23, 1861 the *Independiente* published a letter from the Society for the Promotion of Cotton Cultivation which urged landowners to put their vacant land on the market with the hope of attracting buyers, especially cotton planters. War in the United States with the attendant scarcity of cotton had created an auspicious moment, the letter continued; no time must be lost because Venezuelan cotton production must get well started before hostilities ceased. The appeal was signed by Charles A. Marxan, president of the Venezuela Cotton Company.<sup>37</sup>

Apparently taking advantage of public interest in cotton cultivation, Charles Herman Gustav Loehr, naturalized American citizen of Prussian birth, who had just reached Ciudad Bolívar to serve as United States consul, made contact with the Governor of Guyana. Although this was his first assignment in Venezuela, he had visited the country five years before. His approach to the authorities ended fortuitously; he was granted 12,000 acres "or as much land as I may need" for experimenting with growing cotton. To hasten the start of the experiment, Loehr petitioned aid from the Congress of the United States, or asked the State Department to be his advocate to this end. His needs consisted of twelve hands from among the liberated slaves (the Emancipation Proclamation had recently been issued) who were experienced in cotton culture, "a moderate supply" of agricultural implements, including a cotton gin, an

<sup>36</sup> J. F. Rippey, *South America and Hemisphere Defense* (Baton Rouge, 1947), 66-77.

<sup>37</sup> Henry F. Blow to Seward, Nov. 22, 1861, *Dispatches from Venezuela*, XII.



"adequate supply" of cotton and vegetable seeds, and a loan of \$3,000 that he promised to repay with interest.<sup>38</sup>

Nothing resulted from Loehr's venture into agriculture. He left Ciudad Bolivar to become consul at La Guaira a year later. However, cotton promotion in Guyana lived after him. On March 25, 1863 Erastus D. Culver, who had just become United States minister to Venezuela, informed Seward that Lieutenant Colonel Noble of Minnesota and South Carolina in company with Major F. L. Hagadon of New York were in conference with the Venezuelan authorities. They proposed to bring out white laborers, 10,000 a year at least, and establish a line of steamers from New York to La Guaira in return for \$50,000 a year remission of duties. They hoped to obtain a mail contract from the United States. Culver viewed the plan darkly as long as the laborers were white, former slaves would meet his approval, but the Venezuelan authorities seemed much impressed by the offer.

Whether the Noble-Hagadon proposition was tied to Guyana from its inception is unknown, but it soon became connected with that area. In July, 1863 Culver introduced Hagadon to the State Department (by this time he had promoted Hagadon to "General") as one who had a scheme relating to the Orinoco Valley. Culver asked that Hagadon be permitted to read Loehr's reports from Ciudad Bolivar. For some reason, about which Culver did not elaborate, the Noble-Hagadon contract was dropped in September, 1863.<sup>39</sup>

Other objectives besides cotton cultivation drew attention to Guyana. For instance, the lower Caroni region had deposits of gold and diamonds. Loehr remarked that there was more American interest in Ciudad Bolivar than in any other part of Venezuela.<sup>40</sup>

Such was the political and geographical backdrop for

<sup>38</sup> Loehr to F. W. Seward, Nov. 24, 1862, Consular Reports from Ciudad Bolivar, I.

<sup>39</sup> Culver to Seward, March 23, July 2, Sept. 8, 1863, Dispatches from Venezuela, XIII.

<sup>40</sup> Loehr to F. W. Seward, Nov. 21, 1863, Consular Reports from Ciudad Bolivar, I.

the enterprise of Henry M. Price and his associates. The undertaking did not arise out of nothing: there were many reasons why Venezuela Guyana was regarded as a sure refuge for Confederate planters contemplating expatriation. Not the least of these was the belief that Southerners generally would become colonists of distinction. Many of them were "most honored and trusted by their fellow citizens" and were experienced in the economic pattern possible in the region to which they were being attracted. Moreover, they were seeking refuge from distress in the land of their birth. In every way the Price Grant in Venezuela augured well for success.



## *Conditions of the Price Grant*

PRICE'S PROJECT TO ESTABLISH A Confederate colony in Venezuela was first revealed, so far as it is known, in the "Conditions" set forth in a Resuelto (Resolution), September 13, 1865, issued by the National Executive of the United States of Venezuela and signed by the Minister of Fomento (Development), J. M. Alvarez de Lugo. Dispatched to the Venezuelan legation in Washington, the document stated that Venezuela had "made as many concessions as has been thought compatible with our laws," adding that the desirability of attracting new settlers to vacant lands was obvious. "The government," the explanation went on, "hopes that the Congress on the one hand and the people on the other will give these projects that high cooperation and that decided interest which their nature claims."

By this resolution it became possible for Price and his associates to colonize all vacant or unused lands in the State of Guyana and the Territory of Amazonas. All rights and privileges of citizenship were to be granted to colonists one year after they had acquired residence and naturalization. Such rights included freedom of religion, press and speech, representation in the Congress, according to the census taken every five years, and appointment to local office. Settlers were to be exempt from taxes for five years. Immigrants were to be permitted to import, free of customs duties for five years, agricultural utensils, machinery, salt, iron, flour, wheat and other edibles, and export freely cotton and tobacco grown on the land occupied. The duty-

free period could be extended by the Venezuelan government.

The land involved was located along the 8° North Latitude as far as Santa Cruz, whence it followed the right bank of the Orinoco to the Meta and thence to Colombia (then called New Granada); it also extended to the common boundaries between Venezuela and Brazil and Venezuela and British Guyana. "Gratuitous patents and exclusive privilege" were also granted for "all unoccupied land which lies south of the 8 degree North Latitude on the Orinoco River and the boundary of New Granada." Jurisdiction over mineral and vegetable products to be found "in the lands occupied" were conceded and the company given permission to establish factories and construct railroads, turnpikes, roads, and canals. Land patents there would be given to settlers, as would land in other sections of Venezuela, if immigrants settled there, at the rate of one *fanzada* (about 1.59 acres) per person.

Colonization was to begin within eighteen months and its advance guard contain at least fifty persons. There was to be no termination date to the grant and no recompense to the Venezuelan government. Controversies arising from the grant could not become the subject of international claims, but were to be settled by Venezuelan courts and with the concurrence of the United States minister to Venezuela. Finally, the contract was to be submitted to the next Congress as required by the General Constitution.<sup>1</sup>

According to the broadside of the Venezuela Land Company, a copy of the "Conditions" was signed on February 5, 1866 by Florencio Ribas, secretary of the Venezuelan legation in the United States, and added to it was a statement, also signed by Ribas, to the effect that "Doctor Price is authorized to make such arrangements as may be most expedient for the carrying out of his project of colonization, granting the number of acres which may be required for the colonists."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Memorias de los Ministerios de Venezuela, Discussion of Colonization*, 1866, Vol. 2878, pp. 39-40; *ibid.*, Document No. 28, 1866, Vol. 2878, p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> This broadside is with Price to W. J. Wiley, Jan. 5, 1867, *Miscellaneous Letters*, Jan., 1867, I.



But not everyone in Venezuela shared the enthusiasm for which the government hoped. The Caracas *Federalista*, May 9, 1866, took occasion to insist that immigration was not to be feared, as the settlers "only want to get shelter in the nation's territory."<sup>3</sup> On August 8 a formal protest was filed in behalf of Elias Gorin and Jose Barman. Both gentlemen then resided in Paris but Gorin had come from Ciudad Bolivar. On June 23, 1854 Venezuela had granted them the exclusive exploitation of the auriferous lands in the State of Guyana for a period of sixty years.<sup>4</sup> Another more serious consideration were the plans for mineral development being set in motion by Joseph B. Austin (of which more will be added later).

To clarify the situation and take cognizance of "doubts that came forth" after the first resolution, Minister de Lugo caused to be published in behalf of the "great citizen Marshal President," the Resuelto of June 26, 1866. Under its terms the Price immigrants would have the rights and privileges of citizens as soon as they arrived and could form their own municipal governments, the "Governor" of which must have the approval of the President of Venezuela; any disagreements arising must be submitted to the Federal court. Import privileges given in the grant were sustained, but the articles thus brought in must not be sold commercially outside the lands assigned to the immigrants. Violators of this ruling would be prosecuted. No bridge tolls or other charges would be levied against the inhabitants of other states on any communication facilities the immigrants might construct.

The nature of the lands stipulated in the Price Grant, it was explained, must be agricultural waste lands "not yet given to any person or company" and "all the concessions established by this resolution are granted to any other group of immigrants, who like the one headed by Doctor Price, might come to settle. . . ." (This must have displeased Price.)

<sup>3</sup> May 9, 1866.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 9, 1866.

Because Venezuela wanted the immigrants that Price planned to bring, the Governor of Guyana was instructed to do his utmost to assist the settlers, and 10,000 pesos from the public treasury was authorized for financial aid, to be administered according to resolutions of the Guyana State Council of Finance.<sup>5</sup>

Several other aspects of the Price enterprise merit consideration. First of all, as the United States State Department was later to point out, the Resuelto of September 13, 1865 was not a contract with or a concession to Price and his associates, but the conditions under which a contract or concession might be entered into by the Venezuelan minister in Washington. But as far as can be determined a conventional form of contract was never negotiated with Price. According to extant evidence, he never signed the "Conditions."

On January 15, 1870 James R. Partridge, United States minister to Venezuela, responded to a request for information from Secretary of State Hamilton Fish by stating that "a provisional privilege was granted by the Executive of Venezuela—13th September 1865—to Henry M. Price and others" that had not been fulfilled or ratified by Congress.<sup>6</sup> If any other document was negotiated, Price never indicated its existence: the "Conditions" were used in all promotional literature and likewise presented to the United States as the terms of grant. This procedure would hardly have been followed had not the "Conditions" constituted the contract in the minds of its proponents. Thus, for all practical purposes the document constituted the "Grant Conditions" and it shall hereinafter be so interpreted.

Another oddity of the "Grant Conditions" was that, although the Resuelto of September 13, 1865 assigned the duty of negotiating a contract with Price to the Venezuelan minister in Washington, this mandate was not carried out. Ribas was the one who dealt with Price although Blas Bruzual was the accredited minister to the United States at

<sup>5</sup> Resuelto of June 26 (in *ibid.*, Sept. 15, 1866).

<sup>6</sup> Dispatches from Venezuela, XVIII. The source of Partridge's statement was Florencio Ribas.



this time. He was in Washington because, while he went home for a stay in the spring of 1866, he did not arrive in Caracas, according to *El Federalista*, until April 18, over two months after February 6, 1866, the date on which the "Conditions" were countersigned by Ribas. Mention is made in connection with the Resuelto of June 26, 1866, that the Venezuelan government had had "reports" from Blas Bruzual about the Price enterprise but there is no record of these reports, which were doubtless oral. Thus, no reason comes to light for the Minister's delegating his instructions to the Secretary unless the arrangement with Ribas was preliminary to a contract.

A second aspect is the apparent discrimination in the description of the areas of Guyana and Amazonas involved in the "Grant Conditions." "Gratuitous patents and exclusive privileges" are granted for all unoccupied land which lies south of the 8° North Latitude on the Orinoco River and the boundary of New Granada (Colombia). Later, privileges are conceded over mineral and vegetable products found "in the lands they occupy"; and still later a general boundary is drawn for the whole area in which the Price project might operate. It would seem from this discrimination that along the Orinoco and the boundary of New Granada, that is, the western boundary of the area, there were to be exclusive privileges over all vacant land. In the rest of Guyana and in Amazonas privileges were to accompany occupation. Had there been a genuinely negotiated contract this confusion might have been clarified. As far as actual settlement is concerned the point has no bearing because none of the Price colonists ventured as far west as this region. It is significant only because Price claimed for years that he had exclusive privileges in all the vacant lands of Guyana whether he settled them or not.

That Price was not too clear about the geography of his grant is not surprising. He had not been to Venezuela before 1867 and he appeared to know nothing of it except what he had been told or had read. Also, judging by comments about him and evidence of his own activities, he

appears to have been a casual individual, given neither to shrewdness nor exactness.

It was certainly not the intent of the Venezuelan government to give Price exclusive privilege in the enormous area stretching from New Granada to British Guyana and the Atlantic Ocean and south of 8° North Latitude, or to give it no more restrictions than that the first fifty colonists should arrive in eighteen months. The Resuelto of June 26, 1866 makes that quite clear and, if further evidence is needed, it is to be seen in the contract with Joseph B. Austin signed in the same month.

Prior to 1854 Joseph B. Austin had been associated with H. K. Corning of New York, one of the largest shipping houses doing business with South America. In 1854 he was appointed consul at Ciudad Bolivar. He kept the post for over a year, although he was not in residence for more than a few months. Lured back to Venezuela by the prospect of gold, he arrived at Ciudad Bolivar in August, 1865. Accompanying him to the Upata area was a "Mr. Davis" and the two were reported to be from the Smithsonian "Society" of Washington.<sup>7</sup> The following November the two men returned to Ciudad Bolivar, enthusiastic about their findings and full of plans for developing the mines. A memorial was presented to the local government asking for a concession.<sup>8</sup> Austin, however, did not stop with the local authorities but went to Caracas. There he was favorably received. A contract concluded in June, 1866 granted him mineral concessions for thirty years, renewable for thirty more. One to ten mining companies were to be formed with a capital of up to \$10,000,000 each. Each company would be permitted to work forty mines in the Upata area—a mine was defined as an area of 10,000 square yards—and the forty mines of each company must be a continued

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Mathison to Richard Edwards, Aug. 7, 1865, and reported by Edwards to Lord Russell on Sept. 5, 1865, British Foreign Office 80, Vol. 172, No. 7 (hereinafter F. O.). The authors have tried without success to trace the relationship of these men to the Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>8</sup> Mathison to Edwards, Nov. 24, 1865, enclosed in Edward F. Harrison to Lord Russell, F. O. 80, Vol. 172, No. 9.



portion of land. The usual privileges of the worker were granted such as customs exemptions for equipment. The land must be located in six months and must be vacant land. Venezuela would receive 10 per cent of the net profits.<sup>9</sup> In March, 1867 the *Rosedale*, a schooner from New York, brought the first engineers and equipment for the Falcon Gold Mining Company, one of Austin's enterprises.

The success or failure of the Austin concession does not have bearing on this narrative. But the fact remains that the Venezuelan government was working on it and the Price Grant during the same months and appeared to see both as in no manner incompatible, even though both were to operate in Guyana near the boundary between Venezuela and British Guyana.

A third aspect of the Price agreement that merits attention was the southeastern limit of the area in which he might operate, namely, the boundary between Venezuela and British Guyana. This boundary had been in dispute ever since Venezuela had become an independent nation and was to remain so for nearly thirty years after the Price arrangement was made. If Price did not know this, he was ignorant of one of the international facts of his time. British gold prospectors were already prowling the disputed territory and at least one company, the British Guyana Gold Company, had been in existence since 1863. These prospectors did not have the official blessing of Great Britain; in fact, Edward Cardwell, Secretary of State for the Colonies, expressly instructed Governor F. Hincks of British Guyana to make it clear to the adventurers that they were acting on their own initiative and would have no protection that cost money.<sup>10</sup>

Lastly, the Price agreement stipulated that its terms

<sup>9</sup> George Fagan to Lord Stanley, Apr. 9, 1867, sending enclosures, Lewis Joel to Fagan, March 19, 1867, F. O. 80, Vol. 185, No. 27; contract between Venezuela and Joseph B. Austin, June 30, 1866, Dispatches from Venezuela, XV; Documentos de la Memoria del Ministerio de Formento, 1868, No. 12, 62-63.

<sup>10</sup> Feb. 23, 1866, F. O. 80, Vol. 178. There was considerable discussion about the status of British gold prospectors and the position of the British government was always the same.

would never become the subject of international claims and that all disputes arising therefrom would be settled in the Venezuelan courts. Venezuela naturally desired this clause. As with most Latin American governments, international claims were the bane of Venezuela's existence, and the fact that they arose from its own instability, economic, political, and financial, made them no more palatable. At this time Price apparently desired no truck with the government of the United States. In 1865 he was the bitter, disillusioned Confederate who wanted nothing so much as to shake the dust of his native land from his feet and from the feet of all those who could be induced to accompany him.

Price set about putting his enterprise into operation by forming the Venezuela Company at Scottsville, Virginia early in 1866. In his memorial to Congress in 1888 he listed the first officers as follows: Henry M. Price, president and director; Reverend J. A. Doll, vice-president and director; Jacob Briggs, secretary and director; and Christopher Hornsey, treasurer and director. The directors, as listed, were Colonel R. H. Musser, St. Louis, Missouri; R. R. Collier, Petersburg, Virginia; Richard Goodwin, Jackson, Tennessee; Octavius Goodrich, Smithfield, Virginia; Commodore T. R. Tucker, Norfolk, Virginia; Major J. Harris, New York City; Colonel William Belton, Brooklyn, New York; and Florencio Ribas, Venezuela legation in the United States.<sup>11</sup> All the officers and three of the directors were from Virginia.

A year later the officers of the company were Henry M. Price, president and grantee; Richard H. Musser, vice-president; and Samuel S. Anderson, secretary and treasurer *pro tem*. The Court of Directors was composed of the following: R. R. Collier, Virginia; Honorable K. Rayner, North Carolina; Colonel R. H. Musser, Missouri; Reverend John A. Doll, Virginia; Benjamin P. Van Court, Texas; C. C. Hornsey, Virginia; General J. G. Walker, England; Colonel J. F. Belton, South Carolina; Major A. W. Harris, Tennessee; Major A. W. Burton, North Carolina; Colonel

<sup>11</sup> *Congressional Record*, XIX (4), 3115-3116 (Apr. 19, 1888).



Jas. Hutchinson, Virginia; Colonel S. S. Anderson, Virginia; and Honorable Florencio Ribas, Venezuela. The Executive Council, 40-42 Broadway, New York City, included Colonel J. F. Belton, Major Alex Harris, Colonel S. S. Anderson, and Major Aug. W. Burton. Agents were also appointed for various areas—for England, Major General John G. Walker; for the Mississippi Valley, Williams and Boughan, St. Louis; for Georgia, Colonel A. F. Rudler, Augusta; for Texas and Louisiana, Benjamin P. Van Court, New Orleans; for Maryland and Virginia, Reverend J. A. Doll, Scottsville; and for Tennessee, Major A. W. Harris, New York.<sup>12</sup>

In 1866, Price issued a broadside advertising the grant in the name Venezuelan Land Company. In 1867, when the first immigrants reached Guyana, he was operating the Venezuela Immigration Company. No clarification of the use of these two names was made, but apparently they identified the same unincorporated parent organization. There was but one tract of land, one policy for its development and one president—Price; therefore, it is logical to assume that there was but one company.

But to return to the broadside which was called "a copy of the grant and charter made to us of the Territory of Guyana." The Venezuela Company, it stated optimistically, "has absolute title and control of the entire territory, its mineral and vegetable productions, embracing two hundred and forty thousand square miles. . . ." Equally optimistic and quite incorrect mathematically was the plan of division of the grant. Eighty thousand shares were to be issued on the basis "of one half the grant," each of which would carry eight coupons for 160 acres per coupon, or a total of 1,280 acres.<sup>13</sup> But 1,280 acres multiplied by 80,000 produces 102,400,000 acres, or 160,000 square miles. Twice 160,000 square miles is 320,000 square miles, or 80,000 square miles in excess of the supposed size of the grant. Thus, Price was arranging for more acreage than he had stated the grant

<sup>12</sup> *Metropolitan Record* . . . , March 30, 1867.

<sup>13</sup> Through the courtesy of the family of Maj. Gen. J. G. Walker, the authors have seen one of these certificates with coupons attached.

possessed. Moreover, it will be recalled the "Grant Conditions" had mentioned no specific amount of land, merely vacant land in Guyana and Amazonas. Such deviation, interesting though it may now be, must have contributed little to the ongoing of his Venezuelan colonization scheme.

It was the intention of the company "to establish a distinctive state government under the liberal and enlightened Republic of Venezuela, which shall be moral, social, and purely Southern in all its characteristics." The "new nation" Southerners had failed to win by four year of war was to be achieved in Guyana without the colonist losing "his national individuality."

To achieve immediate settlement of half the grant, the 80,000 shares were to be divided into two equal parts. Price and those associated with him would hold 10,000 shares and 30,000 would be granted to "poor Confederate soldiers, preference given to men of family" upon payment of office fees of \$4.00 and the deposit of \$60.00 for the passage to Venezuela, "without meals." The second 40,000 would be sold at \$1,000 each, payable \$500 down and \$500 on demand. Funds thus acquired would be used for the common benefit, such as for the purchase of steamers, equipment, et cetera. The remaining "one half the grant" would be sold "at increased value," the benefit of which would be shared by the holders of the 80,000 shares.

Hope was expressed that 5,000 shares would be purchased in each Southern state since each 5,000 carried with it the privilege of having a director. Thus the company would become truly Southern.

All stockholders would share in the profits of mines, manufactures, and commerce. It was supposed that the mines alone would yield "Forty Millions" annually or "fifty per cent." The commercial city of the company would be Caroni at the mouth of the Caroni River. "As merchants belonging to the company will have no duty to pay they can command and control this trade, now in its rude state, counting millions and capable of indefinite expansion." The enterprise was a fitting answer to the tough policy



toward the South and Southerners already marked out by the United States Congress.<sup>14</sup>

J. M. Smith & Brother of Norfolk was designated as "shipping agent" for the company and an 8-day passage in "regular line steamers" would be scheduled to start "after the first Monday in April."

The broadside invited correspondence with the Venezuela Company, provided "four stamps" were enclosed. Ribas was the recipient of so many inquiries from persons seeking to learn whether the grant was genuine that he issued a letter publishing "the whole transaction and the facts in relation to the scheme and the country that we have been able to gather from authentic sources." In 1865 the Venezuelan government authorized its minister in Washington to make the grant; Price "accepted it" in 1866 and "in June it was ratified by the Venezuelan Government." He subscribed to Price's main claims, namely, the right to colonize all vacant lands in the "State of Guyana and the district of Amazonas, which includes all the territory east and south of the Orinoco—about 240,000 square miles." Within this area there was very little land that was not vacant, he said; it was large enough for several states. With the right to colonize went "exclusive right and jurisdiction in all mineral and vegetable products; the privilege of importing and exporting free of duty for five years; the right to establish factories and to construct railroads, telegraphs, turnpikes, and canals; the right to form their own municipal and state governments subject of course to the national government." He mentioned the allotment of 10,000 pesos in immigrant aid.<sup>15</sup> No date was given for this letter but, since it included the immigrant aid provision, it must have been written after the Resuelto of June 26, 1866.

<sup>14</sup> On the Harvard College Library copy of the Venezuelan Land Co. broadside appears this undated handwritten note, Price to Sumner: "Every amendment to the Constitution has added Ten Thousand to our Company. I should be pleased if you would kindly consent to continue the fund, if you will offer about Five more, I think I can complete the company in a month. Just think: what honor will accrue to you from aiding in so noble a work as providing homes and support for poor Confederate soldiers."

<sup>15</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 87-88.

A "Circular" of Ribas was made public in the *St. Louis Times*, on May 8 (presumably 1867, because the circular and the editorial note that two vessels had already departed). Again Ribas declared that the grant to Price and his associates comprised "nearly all" the region marked on the map as the State of Guyana.<sup>16</sup>

An analysis of Ribas' statements brings out several points. He never said that a contract was negotiated between Price and Blas Bruzual and signatures affixed. The project was "ratified" by the "Venezuelan Government," not the "national legislature" as the "Grant Conditions" had stipulated. Although the grant of immigrant aid was reported, other provisions of the 1866 Resuelto were omitted, namely, that the privilege to import "free of duty" would be limited to goods destined for the consumption of the immigrants and that the Venezuelan government did not consider itself prevented from arranging other concessions with entrepreneurs seeking to exploit portions of the same area. Ribas was a director of the Venezuela Company and should have known the claims that its broadside advanced. But concessions between individuals and the fluctuating governments in Latin America of the period had the habit of being numerous, vague, and sometimes conflicting.

In short, Ribas appears to have gone along with the Price "scheme," as he called it. The region was enormous and most of it wilderness; there was room for all. The "scheme" was speculative; nothing would happen until settlers began to arrive. When that day came, plenty of vacant land was available and, should the venture succeed, both Venezuela and the promoters would benefit. It all depended on the settlers.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-91.



## CHAPTER IV

*Johnson and the First Exodus*

THE FIRST CONFEDERATES to seek homes on the Price Grant in Venezuela were organized by Captain Frederick A. Johnson who on December 17, 1866 was appointed a director of the Venezuelan Emigration Company by Henry M. Price.<sup>1</sup> Three days later, accompanied by fifty colonists from Missouri and Kentucky, Johnson boarded at St. Louis the *Columbian*,<sup>2</sup> a large and commodious passenger packet,<sup>3</sup> sailed down the Mississippi, and on December 31 arrived at New Orleans.<sup>4</sup> The *Picayune* predicted that in Venezuela the expatriates would soon become "governors and generals in that country of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and political revolutions."<sup>5</sup>

A native of St. Louis, Johnson was thirty years of age. From 1854 until 1861 he had lived in New Orleans and had been engaged in shipping with John O. Woodruff & Company. In the Confederate service he had been adjutant of the Fifth Louisiana Battalion until his honorable discharge in 1862.<sup>6</sup> He had become interested in immigration to Venezuela, he later informed Secretary William H. Seward, as the result of circulars sent out by Price and had agreed to become an associate, provided he could go out as the pioneer of the undertaking. "Voluminous correspondence"

<sup>1</sup> Frederick A. Johnson to President of Guyana, March 15, 1867 (*Vade-Mecum*, 119).

<sup>2</sup> St. Louis *Republican*, Dec. 21, 1866.

<sup>3</sup> New Orleans *Crescent*, Jan. 2, 1866.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 1, 1867.

<sup>5</sup> Jan. 3, 1867.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson to Secretary of the Treasury, Aug. 21, 1877, U. S. Treasury Department, General Records, Group 56.

with Ribas of Venezuela had convinced him of the authenticity of the opportunities the Price Grant afforded.<sup>7</sup> The realities that he encountered proved to be considerably different from any of his anticipations; this discrepancy appeared first in New Orleans.

An advance agent for Johnson and his colonists had chartered an ocean-going vessel for the journey to South America. When the colonists arrived at New Orleans, the news awaited them that the schooner *United States*, which had been purchased with their funds, was in dry dock for repairs and that, meantime, lodgings had been reserved for them in the little town of Algiers, across the Mississippi from New Orleans. However, unwilling to be delayed, Johnson chartered another schooner, the *Elizabeth*, and hasty preparations for departure followed. Extra bunks were built and the crew, entering into the spirit of the enterprise, helped the passengers load their baggage and stores. When all was ready, the *Elizabeth* moved over to New Orleans and tied up at the wharf opposite Jackson Square. Here she remained day after day as the irritation of her passengers rose. At a special meeting Johnson was asked to assume complete responsibility for their affairs with the promise of support, no matter what might result.

The problem was financial. Only a small down payment on the charter costs of the schooner had been made and funds were lacking to complete the transaction. The owner of the *Elizabeth* refused to order her to sail until full payment was made. By dint of high finance, Johnson collected \$1,592 in cash and notes. He then forced the agent to return \$250 of the passage money and to give his note for \$392 more. To this amount Johnson added two notes of his own totalling \$950, for which Benjamin P. Van Court, a former associate of General Sterling Price in the Knights of the Golden Circle, went security.<sup>8</sup> Thus armed, Johnson

<sup>7</sup> Johnson to Seward, Jan. 31, 1869, Miscellaneous Letters.

<sup>8</sup> *War of the Rebellion* . . . (Washington, 1880-1901), 2, VII, 930-953; *ibid.*, 1, XLI (2), 1085-1086. Van Court was active in the Venezuelan project from this time until his death in South America. In March, 1867 he was listed as an agent at New Orleans for the Venezuela Company. One wonders whether his interest was aroused



sought out the owner of the *Elizabeth* with every prospect of swiftly getting his colonists off to Venezuela. But the owner had meanwhile been offered the opportunity of carrying a more profitable cargo of sugar to Northern markets and now wanted only one thing—the colonists off his ship. Johnson refused flatly, whereupon he and all his associates were arrested for trespass. A battle of wits followed in which the public and even the authorities came to admire the determination of the colonists. When they first appeared in court, Johnson refused to give bail, having found out beforehand that the city jail could not house fifty persons. Faced with this impasse, Judge Arthur Castinel agreed to parole the prisoners and permit them to return to the *Elizabeth* until the trial three days later. “After all my trouble to get you off that vessel!” he exclaimed.

The passengers were charged with illegally holding the *Elizabeth* in order to use her for nefarious practices on the high seas. At the trial the testimony of Captain William Frith and the crew of the *Elizabeth*, as well as friends of the colonists, made the situation so unmistakably obvious that the case was dismissed. Johnson then presented fresh terms to the disgruntled owner of the vessel: all the cash he could get, the note of the agent secured by the *United States*, Johnson’s personal note, and a carriage and two horses thrown in for good measure. If this conglomeration of payment was found unacceptable, Johnson threatened two suits, one for perjury and one for damages. The owner capitulated and on January 29, 1867 “the slow moving, miserably appurtenanced schooner was en route to the port of [Ciudad] Bolivar on the Orinoco River.”<sup>9</sup>

Aboard the *Elizabeth* there were now fifty-one passengers, the latest being a lad of sixteen, Donald McDonald, who had attached himself to the group in New Orleans. One

by his friend, Johnson, or whether he helped the *Elizabeth* passengers because he was already associated with Price.

<sup>9</sup> St. Louis *Daily Times*, Jan. 30, 1867 and Johnson’s account of his experiences as leader of the colonists from Dec. 31, 1866 until his return to the United States in May, 1867 (hereinafter Johnson’s Account), 1-7.

passenger, Salvator Barnesconi, had been proprietor of the International Hotel in St. Louis—he was made custodian of provisions and given a passenger list which, he testified later, was in Johnson’s handwriting.<sup>10</sup> However, the list was two names short, unless there were two passengers by the name of William Frith, because that was the Captain’s name. Johnson later reported that fifty-one passengers had reached Ciudad Bolivar. The missing name may have been that of a fourth wife. There was one family, that of John Whitman, which consisted of seven persons, and at least three other couples. When the *Elizabeth* arrived in Venezuela, the “females” listed numbered seven, although Barnesconi had recorded only six. Barnesconi’s list included Mary Austin, Samuel Austin, M. H. Barlow, Salvator Barnesconi, J. L. Bates, Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Beasley, John Bevis, John Brock, M. Carroll, James W. Chapman, Daniel Clary, E. Connolly, P. Davine, Fred P. Derbyshire, R. Felman, William Frith, Lewis Gee, W. S. Harkins, W. W. Healy, George Hinkley, William Howard, J. Hughes, C. T. Johnson, Frederick A. Johnson, C. Knight, P. S. Koscialowski, R. LaPere, S. C. Lawless, C. P. Lewis, H. Miller, E. A. Muir, Donald McDonald, J. McGinniss, E. McMurty, J. McNab, R. O’Neil, W. L. Perryman, J. M. Phillips, John Phillips, George Solari, C. Vallat, Mr. and Mrs. John Wasson, John Whitman, Mrs. C. Whitman, Emma Whitman, John Whitman, Jr., Lewis Whitman, Virginia Whitman, and Willie Whitman.

The six-week passage from New Orleans was beset by storms and calms which put the courage and patience of the passengers to severe test. In early March the *Elizabeth* came to rest in what was clearly the mouth of a large river. While Captain Frith was trying to determine his bearings, the *Isabel*, a British schooner out of Demerara, came alongside and informed him that he was in the mouth of the Orinoco and provided a pilot for the trip up the river.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> March 15, 1894, Ladd Memorial, Apr. 19, 1895, Miscellaneous Letters, May, 1895, I, Encl. 6.

<sup>11</sup> New Orleans *Picayune*, May 21, 1867 (letter dated March 13).



After the trial of the sea voyage, Johnson and his colonists regarded the trip up the Orinoco as something akin to paradise. They were impressed with the beauties of nature: the mighty expanse of the river, the foliage and trees, the gaudily-colored birds, and the soft breezes of the trade winds. The *Elizabeth* moved upstream by day, anchoring at night. The passengers spent the evenings singing ballads. As the voyage continued, good-natured, friendly natives pulled up alongside the schooner in canoes to sell native bread, fish eggs, and sugar. Surprised by their simplicity of life and scantiness of attire, at least one voyager contemplated the potential trade to be had in selling the men paper collars and the women hoop skirts.<sup>12</sup>

The *Elizabeth's* passage through the wilderness ended at Puerto Las Tablas, at the juncture of the Orinoco and the Caroni, a location Johnson compared with Cairo, Illinois. Las Tablas, as it was usually called, was the shipping point for the gold fields and for cattle. Here the *Elizabeth* anchored for a few hours and the passengers went ashore. They were treated with great hospitality. The inhabitants refused to let them pay for their purchases and, when their ship departed, gave them a salute from the town's cannon.

On March 14, 1867 the *Elizabeth* reached Ciudad Bolívar, capital of Venezuelan Guyana. Johnson and the colonists went ashore where they were met by Acting United States Consul John Dalton, the city physician, and customs house officials.<sup>13</sup> The next day Johnson sent a letter to Acting Governor Antonio Dalla Costa, announcing his arrival and presenting his credentials, two letters of introduction from Ribas, his appointment by Price as director of the Venezuela Emigration Company, and a list of the fifty-one passengers.<sup>14</sup> Johnson also tactfully informed him of the financial plight of his compatriots, caused, he maintained, by the long delays of the voyage. He also apologized for the want of foresight of his superiors who had not sent a "special

<sup>12</sup> New Orleans *Commercial Bulletin*, Jan. 28, 1867; New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Jan. 28, 1867.

<sup>13</sup> Johnson's Account, 9.

<sup>14</sup> See above, no. 10.

committee in advance" to assist in the location of accessible lands.<sup>15</sup>

Guyana officials smiled benignly on the newcomers. "They gave us everything we wanted," wrote Johnson, including 1,250 pesos, one-eighth of the total promised by the Venezuelan government. In view of later claims, this point is important. There was no doubt in the minds of the immigrants that everything had been done to establish the legality of the Price Grant. Frederick A. Derbyshire, a former Confederate soldier writing under the name of "Derby,"<sup>16</sup> later reported to the *Picayune* that the grant had been "firmly bound" by the arrival of the immigrants and that subsequent colonists might dispense with governmental red tape and report directly to the headquarters of the colony.<sup>17</sup> Evidence that Dalla Costa agreed with Derbyshire lies in his letter to Johnson, April 7, 1867, which states that the "agreement executed in Washington by the Secretary of Legation of the United States of Venezuela, M. Florencio Ribas, has been ratified and all the conditions are satisfactory in regard to this government."<sup>18</sup> It is not likely that Dalla Costa would have been so cooperative, if he had not considered the Price Grant legal and, certainly, he would not have paid out Federal funds unless authorized by the Venezuelan government. Furthermore, each immigrant was given an official paper, bearing the state seal, assuring him all the privileges of the Price Grant.<sup>19</sup>

British officials in Venezuela promptly informed their government of the appearance of Confederate expatriates, incorrectly including the crew of the *Elizabeth* in their total count.<sup>20</sup> Consul Dalton, a merchant who had acquired considerable affluence and who lived "very elegantly" with his "estimable native family . . . with all the comforts of re-

<sup>15</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 119.

<sup>16</sup> Derby, an Englishman, had been wounded in action. See Confederate Military Records of Missouri, Adjutant General's Office, U. S. War Department.

<sup>17</sup> June 9, 1867 (letter dated Apr. 23).

<sup>18</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 121.

<sup>19</sup> *Picayune*, March 23, 1867 (letter dated May 11).

<sup>20</sup> Lewis Joel to George Fagan, March 19, 1867, F. O. 199, Vol. 62, No. 9.



financed and enlightened life," was especially helpful to Johnson both socially and in his business affairs.

Dalla Costa had received communications from Price for Johnson. The first, dated January 15, 1867, confirmed Johnson's position as director, added the duty of "Commercial Agent," assured him that supplies were being shipped to Venezuela, and urged him to set up a lumber house and store "as soon as you can." The little vanguard of pioneers was encouraged by the promise that a library of 5,000 volumes was being collected for them in England, that more settlers would leave in February for Venezuela, and that Price, himself, would be there in March, 1867. A second letter, dated January 18, informed Johnson that Price had written President Falcon, informing him of Johnson's authority as leader of the immigrants. Both letters were read by the settlers, who were greatly cheered, and by Governor Dalla Costa.

Favorable though this beginning appeared, Johnson was not without his trials. Some of the Confederates were less than courteous to Consul Dalton; some others eyed the 1,250 pesos of the Venezuelan government covetously. Inasmuch as no lands had been selected, specifically, for them, Johnson's first task was that of poring over maps with the Guyana authorities. Before reaching Venezuela, the colonists had favored settling in the Caroni River area, where Price had stated in his broadside he intended to establish a commercial center. Ostensibly because this region had been the subject of numerous prior claims, the Venezuelan authorities tactfully guided the attention of the colonists to lands west of Ciudad Bolivar, along the Orinoco River. Had Johnson known it, this was but a foretaste of the policy which Price was later to encounter with greater significance. As the officials and businessmen of Ciudad Bolivar intended, the colonists were to settle as agriculturists on vacant lands that would enable them to contribute to, not compete with, the commerce of Ciudad Bolivar. This had not been Price's idea, as was evidenced by his broadside. He did expect to send out agricultural colonists; but his greatest dream of wealth for himself and associates

was to materialize from the development of Guyana in other ways, especially through the gold mines and commerce. Since Johnson's purpose in coming to Venezuela had been the selection of good, unencumbered land where his colonists could establish a plantation community, he had no quarrel with this guidance by the Venezuelan authorities.

Lands near Borbon, a small town some twenty miles up the Orinoco from Ciudad Bolivar, were about to be accepted when "the devil took possession of a large portion of the party," as Johnson put it. The devil was dressed in yellow and his name was Gold. His lure increased as lands to be selected moved farther away from the Caroni, natural outlet for the gold mines.

Meanwhile, under the leadership of John Whitman, pressure was building up for a prompt division of the 1,250 pesos promised by Dalla Costa. Disappointed, Johnson met the challenge. Whitman was at once made treasurer and asked to accompany Johnson to the customs house where, Dalton as witness, the money was paid out in coin, carried back to the hotel, was apportioned in piles of \$25.00 and distributed to the colonists. Whitman, unskilled in foreign exchange, found himself short in his own portion. He proclaimed his financial losses a "tedious, unpleasant and unprofitable duty imposed upon him."<sup>21</sup>

Once the money had been divided, there was no holding the gold enthusiasts back. Fourteen of the party bought supplies, hired guides much to the disapproval of their more conservative colleagues and, forming themselves into the Dalla Costa Mining Company, set off down the Orinoco River to the Carratel, a region reported to be fabulously rich in gold, more than one hundred twenty-five miles distant.<sup>22</sup>

Thus did the little colony of Confederates begin to divide. As the *Elizabeth* spread her canvas for the return trip (Captain Frith having with him money due the owner of the vessel), the gold prospectors went their way, some

<sup>21</sup> Johnson's Account, 11, 13-14, 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson to St. Louis *Times*, March 23, 1867 (in *Vade-Mecum*, 122); see also Johnson's Account, 15.



"fifteen or twenty settlers" prepared to follow Johnson up the Orinoco to select a town site, and the remainder stayed in Ciudad Bolívar to find work. One, the young Donald McDonald, immediately became apprenticed to a manufacturer of iron rails and guns.

For the trip up the river Barnesconi and Derbyshire had purchased a sloop, re-named the *City of Orinoco*, and hired as helmsman a Barbados Negro named Joe for \$10.00 a month. The sloop was refurbished in a gay, flamboyant fashion, her hull painted black with vermilion stripes and her deck a straw color—in fact, she looked so new that the natives failed to recognize her.

With only minor mishaps the colonists reached Borbon where they were so warmly received that they would have been pleased to set up their new town nearby, but the authorities opposed the idea. The colonists then moved up the Orinoco a few miles west on vacant land and spent their days investigating the country. At night they slept on board the *City of Orinoco*.

One morning, awakening, Johnson found himself deserted. About noon his colleagues reappeared and through Derbyshire as spokesman presented their case. They had found gold midway up a nearby bluff, he said, and in the course of a morning's toil had accumulated as much wealth as they could earn in months as agriculturalists. He then uncovered a bucket of black sand that glistened like gold. To the group's disgust Johnson was less sanguine than they and, after some discussion, it was agreed that he should take the sand to Ciudad Bolívar for testing. If it should prove to be gold, he was to return with as much equipment as he could buy. Meanwhile, the settlers would continue digging by day and guarding "the mine" by night.

The report Johnson brought back was conclusive: the sparkles in the sand were mica, not gold, and the only result of the group's long labor was a yawning hole in the ground in which to bury all hopes of quick wealth.<sup>23</sup>

Afterwards, Johnson had no more trouble with gold fever.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-28.

The colonists continued to search for a settlement site, deciding at last on a location they named "Orinoco City." Their leader made rules for their governance and divided duties among them. They daily expected the re-enforcements of colonists and supplies which Price had promised them. But nothing arrived, neither colonists nor supplies nor equipment—not even a book for the promised library.

By April 12, 1867 Johnson was ready to leave for the United States where, as director of the Venezuela Emigration Company, he believed he might speed up the sending of needed re-enforcements. He was given a testimonial by a "committee" of the colonists, consisting of Derbyshire, Howard, Clary, Brock, Chapman, and Koscialowski, who expressed appreciation for his devotion to the settlement and hope for its prosperity. Certainly, the land was fertile, for the natives raised crops with little work at all. Pasturage was excellent, but money was needed to start herds. Sugar cane and orange groves were at hand. There was plenty of game for meat. "We will say nothing of gold discoveries as we know nothing of our own knowledge of them," they remarked with sad truth, but they would report from the group that had gone to the mines as soon as news came from them.<sup>24</sup>

Taken as a whole the testimonial was courageous, if not exuberant. And it should certainly be pointed out that Johnson, according to his own admission, had personally provided the colonists all their financial assistance from the time they had set out for Venezuela.<sup>25</sup> The Southern settlers had been pioneers in every sense of the word. The original group was now scattered, many miles apart, some at the mines, some at Orinoco City, and a few in Ciudad Bolívar. Their sentiments were expressed by "Derby's" letters to the *Picayune*—fortunes could be made, if they only had funds for a start. Wisely, "Derby" advised all prospective immigrants to bring with them everything

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.



they could possibly collect in the way of tools, supplies, and even seeds.<sup>26</sup>

Johnson reached Ciudad Bolivar in time to witness the inauguration of Governor Juan Bautista Dalla Costa, who succeeded his brother Antonio. Included as one of the respected citizens in the gala celebration, Johnson spent as much time as possible with the members of the colony who had remained in the city, especially with Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Austin, who had opened a boarding house for their compatriots.<sup>27</sup> On April 21 Johnson sailed for the United States on the steamship *Pioneer*.<sup>28</sup> So far as is known, he never returned to Venezuela.

As leader of the first contingent of settlers on the Price Grant, Johnson had acquitted himself well under difficult circumstances. He had settled some of the Confederates on good lands, convinced that they could prosper, provided they received needed re-enforcements and supplies. So far as he knew, he had also established the validity of the grant, thus paving the way for subsequent immigrants. Certainly, the actions and words of local authorities had given reason for this opinion. He had shown wisdom toward those Venezuelans whose color was darker than his own.<sup>29</sup> Thus, among the residents of Ciudad Bolivar, Johnson had been liked and respected. Especially cordial had been the Dalla Costa brothers, whose family had long been prominent throughout Venezuela.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> June 9, 1867 (letter dated Apr. 23).

<sup>27</sup> Johnson's Account, 32. A family of eight adults could eat at Mrs. Austin's for \$4.50 a week.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27. Apprehension had arisen over the inter-racial situation, and Johnson had been determined to resolve it because he believed that in a "neutral Republic" prejudices should be suppressed. Learning that the Negroes of Ciudad Bolivar, many of whom were runaway slaves from the South, were fearful of him and his party, Johnson had at once set the record straight by accepting an invitation to drink in a public bar with a group of colored men. To have refused, he declared, would have been "as mean as foolish."

<sup>30</sup> Juan, the more distinguished of the brothers, had been governor of Guyana for seven years prior to 1865. After two years in Europe he again became governor, holding the office as long as the Price Grant settlers continued to arrive. He was highly educated, widely traveled, and progressive in his thinking. See *Diccionario Biografico de Venezuela* (Caracas, 1953); *Anales de Guayana*.

Less impressed with Price's planning than he was with the Venezuelan officials, Johnson left for the United States convinced of the genuine opportunities in Guyana for Southerners, provided there was a "well organized board of practical commercial Directors" in the Venezuela Company. He had exhausted his own pocket in behalf of his party, at one time his assets having been reduced to 65¢.<sup>31</sup> Nor had he spared himself physically; during one period he had slept only eight hours in ninety-one. Derbyshire, secretary and publicist of the group, had worked almost as hard.<sup>32</sup>

The *Pioneer* took Captain Johnson as far as Port of Spain, Trinidad. There he boarded the *Ella*, bound for Philadelphia, whose captain agreed to take him along for \$35.00, payable on arrival. En route to Philadelphia, the *Ella* must have passed the *United States*, the schooner on which Doctor Henry Manore Price was sailing to Guyana.

<sup>31</sup> Johnson's Account, 39, 41.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.



## CHAPTER V

*Price and the Second Exodus*

A FEW DAYS AFTER the *Elizabeth* had sailed out of New Orleans for Venezuela, Francis Watkins, a young Tennessee surveyor and engineer, arrived in the city. Despaired of "ever seeing anything like order grow out of the confusion into which our unhappy country was thrown," he later wrote, he had begun to consider "how bad a thing I would accept in exchange for the evils . . . endured." He finally concluded he "could not be worsted to swap with anybody short of Old Nick."<sup>1</sup>

In New Orleans Watkins made the acquaintance of Benjamin P. Van Court, agent of the Venezuela Company, and decided to seek a new home in Venezuela. With a small group of other Confederate expatriates he sailed on the *United States* on February 20, 1867.<sup>2</sup> Moving across the Gulf of Mexico and up the Atlantic seaboard, the schooner arrived at Wilmington, North Carolina early in March, 1867. (Simultaneously, it will be recalled, Captain Johnson and his colonists on the *Elizabeth* were entering the Orinoco River.)

In Wilmington the Venezuela Company authorities printed an advertisement in the *Daily Journal*, announcing that Jacob Lobel at James Anderson & Company was authorized as their agent to charter a vessel for every fifty emigrants and that he would "furnish the stock of the

company to anyone desiring to emigrate, entitling him to 1,280 acres of land."<sup>3</sup> Colonel A. F. Rudler of Augusta, Georgia was listed as the agent of Georgia and South Carolina.

After lying in port for several weeks, according to Price, the *United States* was provisioned and cleared with funds advanced by S. Rowland of Raleigh.<sup>4</sup> She sailed April 6 with approximately fifteen passengers.<sup>5</sup> "The voyage will no doubt prove a long and tedious one," predicted the *Daily Journal*, because "the accommodations . . . are such as will . . . contribute in no little degree to their discomfort. We trust, however, that the emigrants will fare well and that their anticipations may be successfully realized. They wish to establish for themselves a home, and enjoy those rights which many of us are denied. May they attain the summit of their desires."<sup>6</sup>

Watkins subsequently advised the New Orleans *Times* that there had been keen disappointment over the "number of emigrants, and worse chagrin by the frivolous excuses of many who backed out while, at the same time, expressing an eager desire to leave the country." Of these, some were deferred by "innumerable vague reports most zealously spread by a certain designing class concerning the object of the expedition, leading the simple to imagine that the whole affair had a very piratical look, and conjuring strange visions of a black flag, slave trade and ugly traffic generally." Watkins explained that "others had a terrible dread of the constant revolutions, pestilential malaria, huge snakes, overpowering heat and many frightful things said to abound in South America. Others still there were, who would like to go, provided they could be taken out for nothing, assured before starting of good 'lay' on arriving in that happy land."<sup>7</sup>

Those who did sail on the *United States* commanded little

<sup>1</sup> New Orleans *Times*, Dec. 1, 8, 1867 (article dated Nov. 26).

<sup>2</sup> New Orleans *Commercial Bulletin*, Feb. 21, 1867. According to records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, the *United States*, 87.40 tons, 79 ft. x 22 ft., had been built in 1863 and was owned by Benjamin P. Van Court.

<sup>3</sup> Apr. 6, 1867.

<sup>4</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 97. From this source have been drawn the subsequent quotations and descriptions written by Price to his wife.

<sup>5</sup> The total number of passengers aboard the *United States* was 15, some of whom had come from New Orleans.

<sup>6</sup> Apr. 7, 1867.

<sup>7</sup> Dec. 1, 8, 1867.



praise from the *Wilmington Dispatch*. "The scheme did not prove popular here and a number of those who were induced to venture their lives were poor, miserable creatures who had worn threadbare in this country and could not be much worse off anywhere," that paper reported. "An equal portion were reckless, dissipated adventurers, some of whom are happy riddance. There are only a few well-to-do, intelligent people in the party."<sup>8</sup>

Among the passengers, besides Henry M. Price, who embarked at Wilmington were Colonel J. F. Belton, Francis Watkins, and John Van Court. Price characterized one passenger, an English Doctor de la Hay, as a "Don Quixote" in appearance, a widower "and consequently very amiable to a young lady on board. Should not be surprised if we have a wedding shortly."<sup>9</sup>

Twenty-four days out of Wilmington the *United States* entered the Orinoco River. Price wrote that the river presented "a most beautiful sight with its flowers and evergreen trees"; the passengers were "charmed with the scenery and balmy air." Farther along the Orinoco Price heard "delightful music from the howling monkeys who are holding forth like so many Yankee preachers." Early one morning he noted that the "woods are resonant with screams of parrots of every variety" who "darken the air as they fly around, invariably in pairs."

When the *United States* anchored near the village of Iwallappa, Price was called on to prescribe for several children, ill due to dirt eating. For his services he received two eggs, a bird's nest and three mocking birds, black with yellow wings.

Moving slowly up the river, the schooner reached Barancas, location of the first custom house. Price wanted clearance to sail directly up the Caroni as soon as its confluence with the Orinoco was reached, but no such permission could be granted short of Ciudad Bolivar. Accordingly, the journey up stream was resumed and the vessel passed one small

<sup>8</sup> Apr. 7, 1867.

<sup>9</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 96-100. Price's Negro servant, Walker, was also a passenger.

tributary after another until at dusk on May 6 it was anchored at Las Tablas, 200 miles from the mouth of the Orinoco.

Las Tablas was located on a plain 300 feet above the Orinoco, wrote Price, just below the mouth of the Caroni whose falls, three miles distant, could be plainly heard. He glowingly described this area as "the garden spot of Venezuela . . . but now deserted. The inhabitants were royalists and, during the war for independence were destroyed by the patriots. The remains of once splendid castles, monasteries, and cathedrals are still met with." He estimated that Las Tablas had lost 1,000 of its inhabitants to the mines 150 miles away. In this town, Price was told, a few passengers from the *Elizabeth* had collected and from two of them, John Whitman and Captain E. A. Muir, a cousin of Price's first wife, he learned of the ill-fated mining expedition—all of the gold seekers had become ill and four had died.<sup>10</sup>

Having already planned on a commercial town at the mouth of the Caroni, Price chose Las Tablas as the exact site for his Confederate settlement. He acquired "an improvement of twenty acres" and laid out 1,280 more acres near it. The land was fertile, the climate good and, best of all, the location offered opportunities as the supply point for the Caroni, near which rich mines existed. Price wrote his wife, May 7, 1867, that "all of our party and five of the first party (passengers of the *Elizabeth*) have settled here."<sup>11</sup>

But before attempting to establish their homes, the colonists accompanied Price to Ciudad Bolivar, which was reached on May 9.<sup>12</sup> After passing through customs, Price called on Governor Dalla Costa, who received him kindly and made an appointment to meet the immigrants the next day.

The days spent at the Guyana capital were busy ones. Price was treated not only "with respect but honor." Nevertheless, he naively assured his wife that he was "not the

<sup>10</sup> *Charleston Mercury*, Sept. 17, 1867 (letter dated July 6).

<sup>11</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 107-108.

<sup>12</sup> Joel to Chargé d' Affaires Fagan, May 18, 1867, F. O. 80, Vol. 62.



least altered as to pride," adding that his "title to the land is considered fully vested" and that "Congress has granted all I asked."<sup>13</sup> This harmony was disrupted as soon as Price informed Dalla Costa and the businessmen of Ciudad Bolívar of his intention to establish a city at Las Tablas. There was nothing "unpleasant, offensive or arbitrary" about their manner, Price admitted; they simply urged him to explore the upper Orinoco and the Caura and place his settlement there where it would remain dominated by Ciudad Bolívar. To "gratify and pacify" Dalla Costa, Price agreed to make the trip. Almost all of the passengers went back to the Caroni on the *United States*, which was returning to New Orleans, while a few, including Belton, Watkins and Van Court, made ready to accompany their leader on his explorations. Guyana officials went out of their way to get the party started; they had reason to think that they were about to score a victory and push the prospective settlement to the west, as they had succeeded in pushing the Johnson colonists. They had, however, failed to reckon with Price's determination to capitalize on commerce with the gold miners. The Caura River area was, to his mind, all it had been described, a truly magnificent country for agriculture but "in no way meeting our views . . . in the situation of a permanent site."<sup>14</sup>

Companions of Price commented on the journey but refrained from giving the reason for undertaking it. For example, Belton wrote, June 13, 1867, to the *St. Louis Times* that ten days before he had returned from an exploratory trip up the Caura River, a 450-mile tributary of the Orinoco which, rising in the Sierra Pacaraima, flows northward.

This river [he wrote] was a fine wide navigable stream, abounding in timber suitable for ship building and other purposes . . . . The lands are very rich and suitable for the production of any of our staples and cereals. At Maripa the country is a rolling prairie, extending as far as the eye can reach, and we are told by the natives that they stretch

<sup>13</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 110.

<sup>14</sup> *Congressional Record*, XIX (4), 3115-3116 (Apr. 19, 1888).

as far as the Caroni . . . . The country there is ready for the plough, requiring only the industry and energy of our people to make it the most productive in the world . . . . Those of our people who have gone to farming are now doing well, and are contented, wishing only for the arrival of more of our countrymen . . . . The rivers abound in delicious fish, and woods with game. Clothing is not a necessity and tobacco grows everywhere. Mechanics are needed, and in this city [Ciudad Bolívar] can obtain employment . . . at the highest wages.<sup>15</sup>

Another report of conditions in Venezuela was sent to the *St. Louis Times* by John Van Court. Addressed to "My fellow countrymen of Missouri and other states," he declared,

When we reached the little village of Mauripa, it was just at the end of the dry season, and I can testify that, instead of presenting a barren, sunburnt appearance, like our prairies in autumn, they were completely covered with the finest grass, and of the brightest and freshest verdure. The cattle we saw were large, healthy, and fat; the natives appeared healthy and happy, and this can be made the best stock raising country in the world . . . . The sturdy pioneers who went first [on the Schooner *Elizabeth*] are generally contented; and breasting bravely the inconvenience which they anticipated at the outset, and which they will soon overcome and rest happy in the knowledge that from so small a beginning they have sown the seed that will grow into a tree beneath whose kindly shade thousands can repose in peaceful security, and bless those who were the humble instruments of so much good.<sup>16</sup>

Although neither Belton nor Van Court mentioned stopping at Orinoco City, the exploring party had to pass the site, for it lay between Ciudad Bolívar and the Caura River. References to colonists "who went first" probably referred

<sup>15</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 126-127.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-130. John M. Van Court, presumably from Missouri, may have been related to Benjamin P. Van Court of New Orleans.



to this group. If a meeting between Price and the passengers of the *Elizabeth* actually did take place, the colonists must have been sorely tried to learn that nothing for their aid and re-enforcement had yet been provided.

On his return to Ciudad Bolívar Price informed Dalla Costa that his intention to place his city at Las Tablas remained unchanged and that, moreover, he expected a large group of settlers to arrive by fall. The Governor was openly disappointed and urged reconsideration of the Caura River lands. A few days later Price met Dalla Costa again and, after what seemed to be a pleasant greeting, Dalla Costa asked about his plans. Price remained obdurate, whereupon the Governor pointed out a small vessel anchored in the Orinoco and ordered him to board it with a companion of his choice. Price took John Van Court.

Arbitrarily deposited on the Caroni River, Price existed for some weeks in the hamlets of the region, suffering great discomfort under strict surveillance. When he asked to go to Caracas, he was denied passage because he did not have a passport from Dalla Costa. During this virtual exile, new gold deposits having been discovered near Upata, Price claimed that British capitalists had sought him out and tried to buy his grant for \$5,000,000.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, with no more reason than had been given for their deportation from Ciudad Bolívar, sometime in late summer, perhaps August, Price and Van Court were ordered aboard a Dutch vessel loaded with hides and bound for New York. Meantime, both men had contracted malaria and the speed of their exit may have been to get them out of the country before they became worse.

Between the rigors of the sea and the smell of the hides, the northward voyage was a nightmare. Price believed he added cholera, contracted on the ship, to the malaria with which he started the journey. He and Van Court reached New York more dead than alive. The latter, determined to reach home, set off at once for Missouri. Price, more des-

<sup>17</sup> Price to James G. Blaine, June 5, 15, 1881, Miscellaneous Letters, June, 1881, III.

perately ill than his companion, asked to be taken to Manhattan House where Sisters of Charity and Southern residents in New York cared for him "for weeks" until he was fit to travel to Virginia. A few weeks later Van Court died in St. Louis.<sup>18</sup>

The altercation between Price and Dalla Costa appears to have been serious in contrast with Johnson's experience a few months before. The Governor's irritation boded no good for the Price Grant project or for the willingness of the authorities to aid the settlers with the remaining 8,750 pesos which had been proffered them. Unless the trip to the Caura had been financed from this fund, Price received none of it. And none of his party mentioned it.

But Price does not appear to have realized the seriousness of the controversy. If he did, he gave no evidence of the fact. Before he left Las Tablas he summarized the situation in a letter of July 6, 1867 to Colonel Rudler.<sup>19</sup> The Caroni was still the future commercial hub of Guyana trade, he insisted, and he would return to that location. He did admit, however, the agricultural potentials of the Caura River area where he said he had selected lands. He advised future settlers to bring tools, implements, provisions, furniture, and seed with them, as had Captain Johnson. Price made no mention of the predicament in which he had found himself and nothing to indicate that the prospects of his enterprise had dimmed; in fact, the reverse impression was given. "The classes who will do well here and make fortunes are planters, blacksmiths, bricklayers, carpenters, machinists, merchants with capital, surveyers, and engineers," he de-

<sup>18</sup> Exactly when Price and Van Court were sent back from Guyana and how long the former was ill in New York is unknown. Price wrote Rudler from Las Tablas in July, 1867. Luis Roncayolo stated (*El Orinoco y Sus Afluentes* . . . [Caracas, 1934], 51) that Price went to the Caura River in late August, 1867. This is incorrect, for evidence proves that the river journey took place two months earlier; however, it may be correct as an indication that Price was still in Venezuela in August. It is possible that, when he was sent back to the United States, news was given out that he had returned to the Caura. He was in Virginia by December. One of his granddaughters has written of his "lying unconscious for weeks" in New York. See *Congressional Record*, XIX (4), 3115-3116 (Apr. 19, 1888) and Francis E. Price to A. J. Hanna, July 23, 1948.

<sup>19</sup> Charleston *Mercury*, Sept., 17, 1867.



clared. Already three settlements existed, he added. (Undoubtedly, he meant Orinoco City, his own companions on the Caroni, and the group in the Carratel area.) Nineteen settlers had become discouraged and gone home but all except two of these were "Yankees who smuggled themselves among us," he concluded.

Price's enthusiasm about soil, climate, scenery, natives, or opportunity might have been designed to disguise the fact that the undertaking was still pitifully small. The total number of immigrants arriving on the *Elizabeth* and on the *United States* combined had been about sixty-five. Four of these had died and nineteen had gone, leaving some forty-two settlers in Venezuela in July, 1867.

The colonists who had accompanied Price on the *United States* settled along the Caroni, according to Watkins, because sufficient land was not available near Las Tablas. This was probably not the only factor. The number who stayed after the abrupt departure of Price and Van Court is unknown. Colonel Belton went home. Francis Watkins was in New Orleans in the fall of 1867. There he wrote the most practical and detailed statement of any of the Venezuelan colonists, eulogizing nothing and trying to give a down-to-earth opinion of prospects in Guyana. He was not discouraged by his visit; rather, he was deeply impressed with the potentialities of Guyana. He admitted, however, that everything in the way of development still had to be done and that it was "no child's play." Settlers would find "a paradise nowhere," but a home "of peace and plenty" awaited those who were willing to undergo the hardships, endure the toil, combat the difficulties and, in the face of every opposition, win the sure reward of their labors, hardships, and difficulties." The region deserved a visit. Those who wanted to go and see before they committed themselves should make ample preparations to stay, if pleased, but to return, if not. Watkins himself expected to return. "Yet not as I went before—with a load of arms, ammunition and fishing tackle proposing to live by the chase and the angling art alone. . . ." He expected farming

to supply the "little necessities not found in wood or lake. . . ." <sup>20</sup>

But Watkins wrote nothing about get-rich-quick schemes or fabulous deposits of gold or financial assistance from Venezuelan officials. His was a sound and sober treatise which should have been carefully studied by any prospective immigrant before racing to the wharf to board a Guyana-bound vessel.

<sup>20</sup> New Orleans *Times*, Dec. 1, 8, 1867.



## *The Third and Fourth Attempts*

ON MAY 25, 1867 Captain Matthew Cox sailed the schooner *Ben Willis* out of New Orleans.<sup>1</sup> On board the former blockade-runner was a small band of Southerners determined not to be "reconstructed." They composed the third group destined for settlement on the Price Grant in Venezuela, more than two thousand miles southward.<sup>2</sup> Among the passengers were Doctor Bennett Walker Childs and his wife and three children. Born near Huntsville, Alabama, Childs had been reared in Lincoln County, Tennessee, married Fannie A. Boone, a cousin of Daniel, trained in medicine at the New York Physiological College, and in 1861 enlisted as a surgeon in the First Tennessee Regiment. Wounded in the Seven Days' battle, he had been sent home. At the end of the war Childs neither surrendered nor took the oath of allegiance. Until they boarded the *Ben Willis* the Childs family had lived in Mississippi.

Before the *Ben Willis*, bound for Charleston, emerged from the Mississippi, tragedy struck the Childs family; its youngest member, ten-months-old Boone, died and was buried near the banks of the river.<sup>3</sup>

Arriving in Charleston on June 17,<sup>4</sup> the *Ben Willis* sailed from that port two days later with a crew of eight and the

<sup>1</sup> The 78-ft. *Ben Willis* had been captured by the Union Navy. See *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies . . .* (Washington, 1894-1927), 1, XXII, 26, 32.

<sup>2</sup> New Orleans *Times*, May 26, 1867; Charleston *Courier*, May 31, 1867.

<sup>3</sup> This account of the Childs family was given the authors by James B. Childs of Washington, D. C., grandson of Dr. Bennett W. Childs.

<sup>4</sup> Charleston *Courier*, June 17, 1867.

following listed twenty-nine passengers: B. W. Childs, 40, physician, wife and two children; William Clarke, 30, telegrapher; J. P. Clements, 29, physician; Samuel Davis, 24; John R. Hale, 42, merchant; B. Himion, 46, baker; Gustavus Holthusen, 19, confectioner; Herman Luther, 31, carpenter, wife and child; Henry Manley, 17; John Manley, 25; William Manley, 54, wife and child; A. Meik, 54; William L. Morgan, 29, wife and three children; W. H. Ohlandt, 26, farmer; Joseph Ripson, 45, miner; J. T. Terry, 24; D. C. Thompkins, 25, blacksmith; and John H. Yost, 28, carpenter.<sup>5</sup>

The *Ben Willis* arrived at Ciudad Bolivar August 11, according to the report of British Vice Consul V. K. Mathison:

Notwithstanding this being the *third* vessel that arrived from the United States with immigrants for the [Price] enterprise, no agent has so far been appointed at Ciudad Bolivar, nor has the Company established any depot in this state for their reception, so that these unfortunate people from the moment they are landed are thrown on their own resources and their total ignorance of the language of the country will make it very difficult for them to gain their livelihood; besides, this is the unhealthy season of the year when malignant fevers are most prevalent and to which foreigners are more exposed than the natives. I have no doubt whatever that this scheme will end in a complete failure owing to the incapacity of the Directory, which is to be deplored as population is the only element required to develop the resources of this rich country.

Mathison then sent a warning to the British consul at Charleston against chartering vessels unless payment was made in advance.<sup>6</sup>

John Lane, Jr., who had made the trip to Venezuela on

<sup>5</sup> Manifest for British Schooner *Ben Willis*, June 19, 1867, U. S. Treasury Department, Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, Record Group 56.

<sup>6</sup> Mathison to Joel, Aug. 14, 1867, F. O. 80, Vol. 62. See also Roncayolo, 51.



the *Ben Willis*, although his name did not appear on the manifest, did not share Mathison's pessimism. On August 15 Lane wrote from Ciudad Bolivar to the Richmond *Enquirer and Examiner* that the "very tedious and remarkably long journey" was more than compensated for by the "grand and fertile appearance of this country, the salubrity of the climate, and our future prospects in our adopted land." He added that the immigrants would leave Ciudad Bolivar within a few days for Paragua, a village on the river of that name (a 435-mile tributary of the Caroni River in Eastern Venezuela) "some 150 miles in the interior, in the gold district, where we shall locate our land (1,280 acres each) and open the land for farming purposes. And while some will farm, others (and we have a geologist and several practical miners with us) will prospect for gold." Lane claimed that the soil was "rich beyond description; all kinds of grain, vegetables and fruit can be raised here continually." Continuing, he asserted that "gold and other rich minerals abound all over the country; the only thing necessary is to have capital and energy to develop it," and that cattle, "numbered by the millions" could be purchased for one dollar per head.<sup>7</sup>

Another passenger on the *Ben Willis*, Doctor Julius Parks Clements, reported enthusiastically about conditions in Venezuela after his return to Georgia. "We, the party who went out on the *Ben Willis*, kept together, and settled near a village on the Paragua River," he wrote J. A. Doll on November 23, 1867. "When I left Paragua there had not been a moment's sickness among our party." Clements could not have remained long in Venezuela, because sickness soon struck some of the group. Clements characterized the inhabitants of Venezuela as "quite inoffensive and very kind, though very indolent and worthless to society." He spoke well of the government, declared the gold mines were "certainly the richest in the world" and that, "so far as the face of the country is concerned and its productions, it is all that anyone could wish."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Sept. 23, 1867 (*Vade-Mecum*, 131-132).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 134. After his return to Georgia Clements served in the House

Shortly after Clements left the Confederate colony on the Paragua River, a second tragedy struck the Childs family. As owner of three shares of stock in the Venezuela Company, Childs was entitled to 3,840 acres. In October, 1867, as he and the *Ben Willis* passengers began their farming operations, Childs suddenly died from exposure and fever, leaving his widow with two children, Kate Gay and Trall Bennett, seven and nine years of age. Mrs. Childs valiantly triumphed over a series of hardships. In time she found passage for herself and children on the *Louisa* to New York, arriving there about Christmas, 1867. Eventually, they returned to Tennessee.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, back in New Orleans plans were being pushed to send out other colonists to Venezuela. Benjamin P. Van Court advertised that the schooner *United States* would soon make her second voyage "with emigrants . . . for the Gold Mines and Southern Colony in Venezuela." He explained that "A Land Warrant for 1,280 Acres of Land, and a receipt for passage and board will be given each emigrant on payment of \$100 (greenbacks). Tobacco, cotton, sugar, coffee, et cetera can be grown, and exported free from taxes or duties for five years."<sup>10</sup> On July 6 the *United States*, having recently returned from South America, sailed from New Orleans "with emigrants . . . as good as ever left any country. In September next a regularly monthly line will be established from New Orleans to Venezuela."<sup>11</sup>

A report written on the sailing date gave the following information:

Among the passengers are Captain A. S. Thurmond of Texas, member of the present legislature of that State. . . . [He] goes out as *avant courier* in the interests of a large circle of friends and acquaintances to make explorations in

of Representatives. His brother, Judson C. Clements, was a member of Congress and a charter member of the Interstate Commerce Commission. See James A. Sartain, *History of Walker County, Georgia* (La Fayette, 1932), 491.

<sup>9</sup> See n. 3, above.

<sup>10</sup> New Orleans *Picayune*, June 29, 1867. Van Court's address was 69 Canal St.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, July 10, 1867.



the Price Grant, particularly with a view to examine its agricultural advantages. The Captain is peculiarly competent to take charge of the interests of his friends in this enterprise, he being an old and early settler in Texas who has grown up with that country, and been through all the vicissitudes of border life as squatter, ranger, and planter, as well as having travelled over Mexico, Arizona, and California.

Major Leonard C. Johnson of Chicot County, Arkansas, late an officer of General John Morgan's staff, accompanied by Mr. Gilbert W. Sweet of the same country, goes out on a mission similar to that of Captain Thurmond, with the further intention of remaining and preparing for the reception of his friends when they shall follow him. The last-named two gentlemen found upon their arrival . . . [in New Orleans] very much to their mutual pleasure a fellow countryman, Mr. Wm. Wells, already bound for the same destination, and for a similar purpose.

Mr. Michael Fagan of . . . [New Orleans] and Mr. John Douglas, late a practical miner from California, are going together as permanent emigrants. They take with them a variety of agricultural and mining implements, and enough flour and bacon to provision them until they shall have become dieted to the usual and cheaper living of the people of the country. This last precaution, indeed, is taken generally by all on board.

Two others going together from . . . [New Orleans], Mr. Julius A. Neil and Mr. Joseph A. Brandlin, are outfitted with various agricultural implements, and go prepared to stay.

Mr. Robert W. Musser of Missouri, goes as a permanent emigrant. He will devote several months to explorations in company with Captain Thurmond and will, while taking care of his individual interests, prepare and communicate to the public at home minute and detailed accounts and descriptions of the climate, soil, people, manners, conveniences, prices, and prospects of the portions of the grant he explores.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 128-129.

This group of immigrants, the fourth to sail for Venezuela, was en route from New Orleans to Ciudad Bolivar almost three months. According to Musser, the long trip was due to "various delays and mishaps." The *United States* did not reach its destination before October 2. "From Trinidad we came here [Ciudad Bolivar] on the British steamer *Regno Ferreos*, one of the two comprising the Caracas and Ciudad Bolivar mail," he wrote on October 4.

Ciudad Bolivar, old Spanish Angostura, I find to be a town of comfortable, substantial, and handsome brick and stone houses of one, two, and three stories high [Musser continued], stone paved streets with brick sidewalks, a cathedral that would ornament St. Louis; market plaza, forts, and barracks; stores and shops with supplies equal to the demand; and a harbour, large but not good, floating a hundred vessels of all grades from various parts of the world, principally from the upper Orinoco and its tributaries, some from the Negro, through which we can sail from here to the Amazon.

The inhabitants of the town, of whom there are about 15,000, are principally natives of pure Spanish blood, educated, polite, and handsome. The residences of these people and their persons indicate the possession of wealth and knowledge of its uses. The other class of inhabitants, Negroes and mixed, present no appearance of squalor. The Negroes here, of whom the proportion is not large, have been free so long they have got over it, and having now filtered to their position, are civil and well-mannered. . . .

Captain Thurmond and the Arkansas exiles will go next week to the Paragua country, four days journey with asses. This Paragua country is shown on the map to be a common center for nine navigable tributaries of the Aro and the Caroni. It is described as being high, cool, and fertile, producing coffee, cotton, and wheat. The Arkansas boys will stop there, and the Captain will come down the Aro with a view to finding a better river point for the settlement there than this, and he will make general examinations with



views both to agriculture and routes and modes of access to a market.<sup>13</sup>

Of these two parties, the number which remained in Guyana, at least for a time, is not known. Many, however, did come back shortly. Of the members of the second journey of the *United States*, several went out to prospect for further colonization. These, like Thurmond, probably soon returned.

It is unlikely that either of these two group of colonists reached their destination before Price and Van Court had been dispatched home. Certainly, those aboard the *United States* did not, for they did not arrive at Ciudad Bolívar until October. If Price's account of "several weeks" is taken literally, he was probably en route home before the *Ben Willis* arrived.

There is one common factor in the letters describing the experiences of these settlers and prospectors. Aside from Price's mention of meeting members of the *Elizabeth's* party, nothing was said about encountering other Price Grant colonists. This is the more surprising because four groups of record arrived in Guyana between March and October, 1867. Each of the groups was small. Probably, the fifty-one aboard the *Elizabeth* was the largest single company. It is reasonable to suppose that the settlers would have made some effort to keep in touch with each other. The answer to this omission may rest in the complete lack of organization and management at the Guyana end of the project, as the British consul pointed out. It is also noteworthy that every letter concerning the expeditions was written either shortly after the author arrived in Guyana or after he had returned to the United States. In no instance was the sojourn along the Orinoco lengthy.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-134. The date of this letter, which appeared in the *St. Louis Times*, is unknown.

## CHAPTER VII

### *The Price Associates Incorporate*

SHORTLY AFTER PRICE returned from Venezuela, full of malaria and disgust at having been put out of the country, a new emigration company was incorporated in Virginia. This move represented a triumph for those who determined to bring a more businesslike arrangement to the problems involved in the Price Grant and also for those who advocated a broader purpose than providing a haven for Confederates. The certificate requesting incorporation had been drawn up on December 17, 1867 in the names of R. R. Collier, John A. Doll, Henry M. Price, Jacob H. Briggs, C. Hornsey, R. H. Musser, Benjamin P. Van Court, J. Frederick Pattison, A. F. Rudler and their associates. The company was "based upon a grant of land made by the Venezuelan government to Henry M. Price and his associates, September 13, 1865." Collier, Doll, Price, Hornsey, and Briggs presented the certificate to the City Court of Richmond on February 4 and the incorporation of the American, English and Venezuelan Trading and Commercial Company was completed and signed on February 12, 1868.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the new organization (hereinafter described as AEVCO) was declared to be the carrying of passengers and freight and otherwise trading between the ports of Virginia and elsewhere in the United States, England, and South America. The capital stock was \$2,000,000 divided into \$100 shares. Nothing was said in the act of incorporation about colonization, but this

<sup>1</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 92-95.



function was included, as Price explained later. In fact, the company was formed with this end in mind, and with some exceptions the officers of the old Venezuela Company became those of the new company.<sup>2</sup> Price wrote that he had turned over all his rights in the Price Grant to the new company on April 4, 1868.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, after 1868 there was but one company for the implementation of the Price Grant. The original Venezuela Company, the Venezuelan Land Company of 1866, and Venezuelan Emigration Company, whether they had been the names for the same or separate organizations, now supposedly ceased to exist. There is evidence that the AEVCO was the only *incorporated* one. Had this not been so, the existence of the earlier organizations could hardly have been eliminated by a gentleman's agreement.

The designation of officers and directors of the new company was significant. Price was no longer president but merely a director—he claimed his ill health made it impossible for him to continue as president but, more than likely, his associates wanted an abler leader. Richard H. Musser was chosen to head the corporation. R. R. Collier became vice-president, C. Hornsey treasurer, and Jacob H. Briggs secretary. These three were Virginians. Among the directors were John A. Doll of Virginia, A. F. Rudler of Georgia, Benjamin P. Van Court of Louisiana, Florencio Ribas of New York City, and James F. Pattison of London, England.<sup>4</sup> However, before the end of 1868 Pattison had become president, Price honorary president, as well as director, Van Court had been replaced as director by Frederick A. Johnson, now back in New Orleans, and Ribas had severed his connection with the company.<sup>5</sup> Pattison's rise to power had not been without opposition, a fact which caused subsequent conflicts: Johnson was one of the dis-

<sup>2</sup> *Congressional Record*, XIX (4), 3115-3116 (Apr. 19, 1888). Incorporation was designed to facilitate the sale of bonds and stock and the negotiation of loans.

<sup>3</sup> Price to Secretary of State, Dec. 18, 1895, Miscellaneous Letters, Dec., 1895, II.

<sup>4</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 93.

<sup>5</sup> J. Leslie Clark, *Emigration to Venezuelan Guyana* (London, 1868), 2.

affected. In spite of the numerous responsibilities and powers assigned to him, he explained that he exercised none of them "for I was not satisfied of the success of bad policies and irregularities in the management." Instead he took a position in the office of the Mayor of New Orleans.<sup>6</sup>

The antecedents of James F. Pattison and his wife, Margaret Amanda, are clouded, indeed. Equally uncertain are their first affiliation with the Price Associates. Mrs. Pattison had started her book collection for the venture early in 1867 and Pattison had been employed by Price later the same year.<sup>7</sup> At the time of the organization of AEVCO his residence was said to be London. Later, when he and his wife published promotional literature in England, they both were listed as "late of Baltimore County, Maryland." Pattison's character is quite clear, however; he was ambitious and none too scrupulous. Price considered him the villain of the enterprise.

Pattison's attraction for Price probably grew out of his plans to develop the Price Grant in England. This had been a part of Price's original plan. On November 13, 1866 Price had written Major General Walker, a former Confederate living in England and one of the directors of the old Venezuelan Company, authorizing him to borrow on bond of the company a sum not exceeding \$5,000,000, if he could not sell enough stock in England to purchase two steamships and supplies for the company's mining operations.<sup>8</sup> There is no evidence that Walker ever carried out this commission; in fact, by early 1868 he had returned to the United States.<sup>9</sup>

Price contemplated a trip to England after his business in Venezuela was completed in the summer of 1867.<sup>10</sup> He wrote his wife to this effect and spoke of it frequently enough in Ciudad Bolivar for the British consul there to

<sup>6</sup> Johnson's Account, 44.

<sup>7</sup> Deposition of J. Leslie Clark, March 6, 1894, Memorial of William M. Ladd to Secretary of State, Apr. 19, 1895, Miscellaneous Letters, I, Encl. 8.

<sup>8</sup> On Stephen Decatur's copy of broadside of Venezuelan Land Co.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Decatur to A. J. Hanna, Nov. 19, 1958.

<sup>10</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 99.



report to his government.<sup>11</sup> Of course, the disastrous impasse that later arose between him and the Guyana authorities prevented his making the visit.

As a preliminary to the establishment of a London office for AEVCO, J. Leslie Clark of St. Louis, a nephew of Mrs. Pattison, arrived in London in November, 1867. He remained there until he accompanied the English colonists to Venezuela. After Pattison became president of the company, Clark was made acting secretary of the English office. The Pattisons themselves were in and out of England and the United States.

During one sojourn at the London office, 3 Crescent, America Square, E. C., the two Pattisons and Clark compiled the *Emigrant's Vade-Mecum, or Guide to the "Price Grant" in Venezuelan Guyana*, the preface and introduction of which were written by Mrs. Pattison. With a bit of false modesty she disclaimed any "personal motives" in her "little work." Rather, she said, she was paying a debt to the land of her birth and education "in that country's hour of misfortune." She believed it would be a "source of two-fold joy and satisfaction" to English men and women who sympathized with the "oppressed South" to learn that, although "Southern chivalry may have been overpowered by numerical superiority," the energy and industry that had made the South what it had been, had a new field open before it, namely the Price Grant "of 240,000 square miles given as a future home to the Southern people as well as to every other Anglo-Saxon who may wish for a healthy and happy dwelling place." Mrs. Pattison was convinced that Price, a "distinguished citizen of the famous Southern state of Virginia," had accepted the grant partly from patriotism and partly from "an intelligent view of the future commercial interests of the world." Venezuela was the very place to which Anglo-Saxon civilization should be attracted. The migrating Southerners were likened to the Greek colonists who in ancient times founded new cities to escape

<sup>11</sup> Lewis Joel to George Fagan, May 18, 1867, F. O. 199, Vol. 62, No. 12.

political controversies. Attention was drawn to the nearness of the Orinoco River to British Guyana and Trinidad, thus affording the settlers in Venezuela their "most natural allies in the neighborhood." The "first Anglo-American colony chiefly issuing from the Carolinas and Virginia" had already settled on the Caroni, declared Mrs. Pattison, blandly ignoring the efforts of the *Elizabeth* passengers at Orinoco City in a way that must have outraged Captain Johnson.<sup>12</sup>

*The Emigrant's Vade-Mecum*, or *Vade-Mecum*, as it is generally called, was a unique compilation. Like promotional literature generally, it made the most of its slim resources of fact, stretching that which was favorable to the limit but drawing a thick curtain of silence over what might create doubts or discouragement. The original printing had 150 pages, more than half of which was a description of Venezuela, its climate, topography, birds, plants, animals, and natural resources, the most distinguished source of which was Humbolt's *Personal Travels*. . . . But from this opus was dropped all reference to liabilities found in the region, especially if they were climatical. A summary of the "conditions" under which the Price Grant could be made and which had been issued by the Venezuela government on September 13, 1865, was included, but with a most revealing difference. Contrary to the terms of the Resuelto of September 13, 1865 and the broadside issued by Price in 1866, Pattison was inserted as "the Director General for Europe" who was granted the right by Venezuela to visa certificates of immigration.<sup>13</sup> Equally misleading was a map of the Price Grant on which were located six colonies so numbered. Two were Las Tablas and Santa Cruz, Venezuelan towns existing long prior to the Price Grant. Some of the colonists may have settled there; that was true at Las Tablas and may have been true of Santa Cruz although there

<sup>12</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, Preface, 1-4.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 86. It may have been proper for Pattison to have exercised the right at the behest of the company, but it was not for him to do so as a part of the original grant under the signature of Minister of Development Alvares de Lugo.



is no proof. To the other settlements immigrants had actually gone—Caroni, Paragua, Carratel, and Orinoco City. Ciudad Bolivar was located by its earlier name, Angostura.

Numerous letters and reports from those who had already visited Guyana were reprinted as were excerpts from Price's diary until his brush with the authorities in July, 1867. No mention was made of that disastrous episode. Other letters were doctored or expurgated. For example, Johnson's to the St. Louis *Times*, written from Ciudad Bolivar, March 23, 1867, was made to refer to AEVCO, although that company had not been initiated until December, 1867 and not incorporated until February, 1868. Cut out of Watkins' long communication to the New Orleans *Times*, November 26, 1867, were the descriptions of the hardships and liabilities that faced the colonists who dared to win the wealth the area undoubtedly possessed.<sup>14</sup> *Vade-Mecum* also reproduced a letter from Doctor Julius P. Clements of Georgia, who had gone to Guyana on the *Ben Willis* in the summer of 1867. After his return he wrote J. A. Doll concerning his experiences, ending the letter as follows: "When I left Paragua [Paragua was the site where the group settled] there had not been a moment's sickness among our party."<sup>15</sup> One cannot believe that Clements fathered this statement because some years later, on May 14, 1894, he wrote to Trall B. Childs, "I was very sick before I left there [Guyana], was in the hospital in Ciudad Bolivar about two weeks and was not well for six months after I got home."<sup>16</sup>

Venezuela was described as having a "kindly, fostering, aristocratic, republican form of government."<sup>17</sup> Actually, during this period it had undergone continuous eruptions of political factionalism. Southerners were depicted as "trooping eagerly to the promised land." Actually, the number had been disappointingly small. No mention was made of the nineteen who had returned out of Johnson's fifty-one, nor of those who died from fever. Equally silent was *Vade-*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 122, 139-143.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>16</sup> See Childs Family Papers.

<sup>17</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 145.

*Mecum* on the absence of organized assistance in Guyana. However, the potential wealth of the area was repeatedly pressed home on the unsuspecting.<sup>18</sup>

In behalf of Price, Mrs. Pattison set in motion a book collecting campaign for a library in "Caroni, South America." Her appeal and a list of those benevolently inclined to respond were included in *Vade-Mecum*. "My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, and all who sympathize with the unfortunate and homeless Confederates," began this solicitation which asked for "old books, Bibles, prayer books, and works of light literature, history geography or science." The South had been rendered bookless by the atrocities of Sherman and Sheridan. "*The books they could not steal they burned.*" The London *Standard* commented on this deplorable situation under the title "Northern Vandalism."<sup>19</sup> Mrs. Pattison acknowledged contributions. Sixty-five private donors were publically thanked as was the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which had provided books for Sunday School children as well as tracts and "some old stock" for the use of "100,000 emigrants from the Southern states of America now settling at Caroni, on the Orinoco River on a gift of land made to them by the Venezuelan Government."<sup>20</sup> The collection, if ever actually assembled, was heavily weighted with Bibles, prayer books and tracts. At any rate, the appeal for the bookless South roused the ire of Captain Johnson as a futile gesture and no substitute for tools, equipment, and more colonists to get agriculture moving.<sup>21</sup>

*Vade-Mecum* was circulating in England and the United States by the summer of 1868. Distribution in London was made by Pattison, by Frederick H. Hemming, former consul for Venezuela in London, and by Francisco Leander Davis, then consul for Venezuela.

In the fall of 1868 J. Leslie Clark got out an abridgment of *Vade-Mecum*, entitled *Emigration to Venezuelan Guy-*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson's Account, 44.



ana.<sup>22</sup> Instead of the long descriptions, testimonial letters et cetera of the larger volume, Clark contented himself with a fairly brief essay on the Price Grant and Guyana, a list of the new officers of the company, and certain practical details concerning the techniques of migration. The company intended to keep a tight hand on everything. "No emigrant can settle in the 'Price Grant', which occupies all the vacant land in Venezuelan Guyana and the district of Amazonas, except by and through the assistance of this Company whose agents are at every port on the Orinoco as well as in Trinidad, West Indies." While it was still possible to buy 1,280 acres for £ 200, Clark stated, smaller amounts were offered at an increased price; that is, the less land one bought the more in proportion was paid for it. Twenty-five acres were priced at £ 8 and ten acres at £ 4. Should 1,280 acres be sold in 25-acre tracts, the amount it would bring was £ 409 instead of £ 200; similarly, if 1,280 acres were broken down to 10-acre tracts, the amount for the tract totalled £ 512. It was greatly to the profit of the company to sell in small amounts. Sharing in the profits which the company expected to gain for its enterprises other than land was reserved for those buying a share coupon of 1,280 acres. Rates for passage to Guyana were also included. Sailing ships taking a month in transit, charged £ 15 to £ 20 for adults. The speedier steamers, taking less than twenty days en route, were priced £ 25 or £ 30. Lists of merchants in various parts of England indicated where "arrangements" had been made for supplying immigrants on "advantageous terms" which presumably they would pay themselves.

Since the abridgment came out some time after the original, Clark included comments on the original from London newspapers. These comments appeared in August-September, 1868 and, although Clark claimed they were quoted from "the principal papers of London," half of them appeared to be technical publications. Papers containing

<sup>22</sup> See above, n. 5. The only copy of the abridgment located is in the Church Collection, John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, R. I.

comments were *Market Review*, the *Civil Service Gazette*, the *Mining Journal*, *Investor's Guardian*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Era*, *Carmarthen Journal*, *Athenaeum*, and the *Morning Post*. The *Times* contributed nothing.<sup>23</sup>

In the papers generally, interest was shown in Guyana and praise given Mrs. Pattison, the "Southern lady" compiler of *Vade-Mecum*. It was assumed that immigration from the former Confederacy was very large: on August 22 the *Money Market Review* mentioned seven shiploads, "if we are rightly informed." The only criticism came from "Oxoniensis," who belabored certain word usages. "Investor's Guardian," to whom the letter was written, replied by admitting it knew nothing of the company or its promoters "beyond what we learn from this book" but "careful examination" failed to disclose anything but "honest and bonafide intentions."<sup>24</sup>

None of these comments on or reviews of *Vade-Mecum* actively encouraged British immigration to Guyana. Happily, however, the book appeared at a time of depression and attracted prospective settlers. Before long the largest group of which there is a record began to gather for settlement in Venezuela. This company, the largest to attempt colonization on the Price Grant, suffered the most tragic experience of all and stirred up the greatest storm of which there is record.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-17.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28. The letter was dated Sept. 15, 1868.



## *Van Court and the Fifth Exodus*

AFTER 1868 TWO AGENTS in the United States were designated to receive applications from prospective immigrants to Guyana; one was John A. Doll of Scottsville, Virginia; the other was Frederick A. Johnson of New Orleans.<sup>1</sup> Doubtless, these appointments contributed to the broad authority Johnson said was assigned to him, but which he did not use because of a conflict with other officers of AEVCO. Johnson was both frustrated and irritated by the course or lack of course, as he put it, taken by those to whom the implementation of the Price Grant had been intrusted. He was conscious of his own contribution to the project. Under his guidance the initial requirement of the "Grant Conditions" had been met, namely, the arrival of fifty settlers within the eighteen months. "*Without them, no such grant could or would have existed,*" he contended. "And those who were to be most benefited by the Pioneer Company . . . could not have done too much for this noble Company in honor to themselves and for the purpose of inspiring confidence in future emigrants . . . or at least as a disguise of inability to handle the matter from pecuniary or other causes."

When the *United States* returned from her first voyage, bringing Johnson accounts from his former companions of "broken promises of assistance, of ineffective efforts to excuse neglect totally at variance with letters written me . . .,"<sup>2</sup> he became genuinely wrought up. He strongly

protested the fate of the settlers and won the support of many of the company officials to his point of view. Richard H. Musser, the first president of AEVCO, did what he could, according to Johnson, but Pattison's rise to the control of the organization prevented anything from being accomplished. Later, a second blow fell—the untimely death of Benjamin P. Van Court.

From the early days of the Price Grant, Van Court had interested himself in its transportation and commercial activities. With his own funds he had purchased the *United States*. Shortly thereafter he had bought the *Ben Willis* from her English owners on mortgage. Prospects of developing a good passage as well as freight trade with Guyana appeared bright and, by no means, limited to serving settlers going out to take up land under the Price Grant. The Venezuelan gold mines were luring Southerners and the reason was not far to seek. Price Grant colonies were primarily agricultural. True, the Price Associates were counting on ultimately reaping wealth from mineral deposits, but, meanwhile, free-lance gold prospectors might possess themselves of pick and shovel and, who knew, fortune in short order. "Hundreds" of Southerners, according to the United States consul at La Guaira, pursued this end with high hope.<sup>3</sup> And as persons and supplies moved back and forth in increasing numbers, more individuals would be enticed to take lands from the Price Grant and go to Guyana to live. Of course, those who planned to sail from New Orleans were prospective customers for Van Court's line which he advertised would make one trip a month.

Both the *United States* and the *Ben Willis* were slow-sailing, thoroughly uncomfortable vessels, judging from the comments made about them. Van Court proposed to dispose of them and buy steamships. However, before so doing, he decided to go to Venezuela himself, first to Caracas for business discussions with the Venezuelan authorities, and thence to Guyana to select land of his own. Apparently, this was his first visit to Venezuela since Price had started his

<sup>1</sup> *Vade-Mecum Abridgment*, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson's Account, 43-44.

<sup>3</sup> Loehr to Seward, Oct. 4, 1867, Consular Reports from La Guaira, X.



enterprise, although as agent in New Orleans in 1867, he had been responsible for publishing a report from the Johnson party in the *Picayune* which that newspaper interpreted to mean he had been in Venezuela.<sup>4</sup>

The *Ben Willis* sailed from New Orleans around March 10, 1868, on her second voyage to Venezuela. The number of her passengers was estimated at "fourteen or fifteen"; among them, besides Van Court, were Francis Watkins, Captain William Quirk, and a Mr. Pierce. The vessel arrived at La Guaira on April 12.<sup>5</sup> Van Court had been ill before he undertook the voyage; in fact, Johnson considered that most men in his condition would have stayed home.<sup>6</sup> By the time Venezuela was reached Van Court was worse; on May 8, 1868, he died of what was called chronic bronchitis. Previous to his death he had given power of attorney to Francis Watkins. Without calling upon Consul Charles Loehr, Watkins proceeded to function as his friend's representative. Van Court was buried on May 9 in the Strangers Cemetery, located near La Guaira. The *Ben Willis* was sold to pay the debts of the vessel and those of her owner incurred during his illness.<sup>7</sup>

Van Court's personal effects had fallen into the hands of "irresponsible persons" and for a time could not be found. Loehr persevered in his inquiries with ultimate success. When the baggage consisting of a trunk and a carpetbag was recovered, it was found to contain warrants for land on the Orinoco River. Van Court's friends wrote his family in St. Louis but received no response.<sup>8</sup> Doubtless this was due to the fact that Watkins had already informed them.

The other *Ben Willis* passengers remained in Venezuela for some months. Quirk and Pierce acquired land near Turnero in the State of Aragua—their story deserves a

<sup>4</sup> May 19, 1867.

<sup>5</sup> Loehr to Seward, June 13, 1868, Consular Reports from La Guaira, X.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson's Account, 60.

<sup>7</sup> Loehr to F. W. Seward, June 13, 1868, Consular Reports from La Guaira, X.

<sup>8</sup> Erastus C. Pruyn to F. W. Seward, Feb. 12, 1869, Dispatches from Venezuela, XVI.

separate telling (Chapter IX). Several died and the others eventually returned to the United States. There is no evidence that any of them went to Guyana.

Van Court's death inflicted a blow on the AEVCO in the area of New Orleans and the Mississippi River. Johnson testified that activity stopped with his passing. His family, consisting of a wife, five daughters and one son, showed no interest in his claims.<sup>9</sup>

Van Court was a more serious liability to AEVCO than would seem apparent at first glance. The Price Grant was dogged from the beginning by the lack of steady commercial connections between its home base and the region in which it contemplated development. Johnson had already come to the conclusion that to dump helpless settlers in a foreign wilderness before commercial communication had been promoted with their homeland, was "putting the cart before the horse."<sup>10</sup> Van Court agreed with him and set about working toward a remedy. His trip to Venezuela would have proved an asset to AEVCO, probably, had he lived to complete the journey to Caracas. No one from among the Price Associates had had any direct contact with the Federal authorities there. Had Van Court reached the Venezuelan capital before going to Ciudad Bolivar, there might have been a businesslike appraisal of conditions in both places, a touch with reality which, up to that moment, had been definitely lacking. Such reflections are of course speculations on what might have happened, speculations that might have never materialized. Nevertheless, it seemed as if a turning point in the affairs of the company was in prospect when Van Court set out, a turning point that was never reached due to his death. AEVCO continued on its vague course until two more fiascos occurred, one of which aroused international agitation.

<sup>9</sup> Loehr to Hamilton Fish, Apr. 30, 1869, Consular Reports from La Guaira, XI.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson's Account, 45, 49.



*Quirk's Experiment—An Interlude*

THE RELATIONSHIP OF WILLIAM QUIRK to the Price Grant is somewhat tenuous. He and his family went to Venezuela on the second voyage of the *Ben Willis* that ended in the death of her owner, Benjamin P. Van Court, and the sale of the vessel at La Guaira. The *Ben Willis* had been headed for Venezuela Guyana. It stopped at La Guaira to permit Van Court to transact business at Caracas. Van Court was going on to Guyana to select lands for himself on the Price Grant; Francis Watkins, another passenger, was also en route to Guyana for his second trip to the Price Grant, and, when the voyage was cut off at La Guaira, most of the passengers returned to the United States, thus showing that their destination, also, was Guyana. These circumstances would indicate that Quirk shared the destination of the others and intended at least to inspect the Price Grant where 1,280 acres had been offered free to Confederate soldiers willing to migrate and develop lands. When the *Ben Willis* could not continue to the Orinoco, Quirk found acreage in Northern Venezuela; apparently he had made up his mind to stay in that country. This would seem a logical conclusion from known facts and thus the story of Quirk's experiment relates to a study of the Price Grant.

Quirk, born in Charleston, South Carolina, April 6, 1837, went to Louisiana about 1855 and lived there until 1861, when he joined the First Regiment, Louisiana Infantry, as a lieutenant. He served throughout the war, advancing in

rank to captain.<sup>1</sup> He fought at Chickamauga, Shiloh, and Corinth and returned to South Carolina as a member of the staff of General William J. Hardee.<sup>2</sup>

Quirk's civilian career had been that of a planter, especially of Sea Island cotton. Badly reduced in circumstances after 1865 and discouraged over his prospects at home, he decided to migrate to Venezuela where he understood "land was cheap and labor plentiful."<sup>3</sup> He had mulled over the prospect for several years. In March, 1868 he left, taking with him his wife and children. It was not his intention, apparently, to become a Venezuelan citizen. He determined simply to improve his fortunes without giving up the protection of the Stars and Stripes, even though he fought four years for the Confederacy.

Accordingly, he sought out Charles Loehr, United States consul at La Guaira and also the United States minister at Caracas. His relations with both were amicable, as was not usually the case with migrating Confederates. Such wisdom and foresight on Quirk's part paid dividends later.

As soon as he could do so, Quirk rented a small plantation known as "Guayabitas," just north of Turnero, east of Maracay and about ninety miles west southwest of Caracas. For a period of approximately eighteen months he was far more successful in producing cotton than he had anticipated. His cotton was sold in London and Liverpool for from 45¢ to 75¢ a pound.

His enterprise was assisted by loans from nine mercantile houses of La Guaira and Puerto Cabello; each had contributed \$400, a total of \$3,600.<sup>4</sup> To stimulate the cultivation of Sea Island cotton in other plantations, Quirk offered 20,000 pounds of seed for sale at 40¢ a pound. In the opinion of Loehr, Quirk had become by 1869 the principal cotton planter in Venezuela.<sup>5</sup> His prosperity had been

<sup>1</sup> Confederate Service Records of Louisiana (in National Archives, Washington).

<sup>2</sup> Obituary, *Charleston News and Courier*, May 26, 1895.

<sup>3</sup> Memorial, Quirk to Fish, July 13, 1871, Miscellaneous Letters.

<sup>4</sup> Loehr to Fish, Oct. 15, 1869, Consular Reports from Venezuela, XI.

<sup>5</sup> Loehr to Fish, Nov. 15, 1869, *ibid.*, XI.



such that he had repaid the borrowed capital within a year at 12 per cent interest.<sup>6</sup>

Encouraged by the results of this first experiment, Quirk undertook to raise Sea Island cotton on a more extensive scale. Additional capital needed for such an undertaking was provided by a personal loan and funds from H. L. Boulton & Company of Caracas, an English firm of prominence and prosperity. The net proceeds were to be divided equally between the company and Quirk. Late in 1869 about a thousand acres for this new planting were leased from an estate known as "Tocoron," some twenty-five miles south and slightly west of "Guayabitas" in the State of Aragua.

Quirk cleared the land, built fences, dug canals and ditches, erected the necessary houses, and generally prepared the plantation for production. He had already purchased from the United States machinery for ginning the cotton and processing it for market; he had likewise purchased farming tools, horses and other animals. To supplement native labor, he had brought about forty experienced workers from the United States at his own expense. Altogether, Quirk estimated that he had invested not less than \$50,000 in the venture.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout 1870 Quirk's progress continued. His success led to a further 3-year agreement with the Boulton Company, during the first two years of which the net profits were to be divided equally as before; profits of the third year were to be Quirk's exclusively.<sup>8</sup>

But conditions in Venezuela did not permit continuance of such peaceful prosperity. Quirk had started his project under the regime of President Jose Ruperto Monagas of the "Blue" faction. In 1869 the "Blues" and "Yellows" had once more become embroiled in conflict and by 1871 the

<sup>6</sup> Robert C. Morris, *Report of Claims Before the United States and Venezuelan Claims Commission* (Washington, 1904), 286-290. The contents of this chapter are based on Quirk's statement and other evidence in the papers of the United States-Venezuelan Claims Commission, 1903.

<sup>7</sup> Quirk to Fish, July 13, 1871, Miscellaneous Letters. Quirk paid \$5.00 for each worker's passport.

<sup>8</sup> Morris, 286-290.

victorious "Yellows" had put Guzman Blanco in office. His supporters spread through Northern Venezuela, plundering and destroying when and where they pleased. A nefarious "Yellow" was General Juan Linares Alcantara. Quirk had a brush with his forces while making a business trip to La Guaira, was held captive for two days and robbed of two mules and other effects.<sup>9</sup> In the spring of 1871, the plundering Alcantara moved closer. Disaster struck Quirk's "Tocoron" plantation on April 19, 1871.<sup>10</sup>

Between eight and nine o'clock, [he reported] in the morning of that day a body of regular soldiers, nearly 300 in number, commanded by officers of the Venezuela Army and constituting a part of the military force of General Alcantara, civil and military Governor of the state of Aragua, came to 'Tocoron,' and committed acts of robbery and violence. They first tied the bookkeeper with a rope. They then visited the stables from which they stole six horses and a mule.

Quirk tried to stop the marauders by holding a United States flag, but the officers told him they had no respect for the emblem and would shoot it in his hand and kill him, if he refused to give them a rope with which to tie the horses. They added that they were "carrying out strictly the orders of General Alcantara."

The marauders next entered Quirk's dwelling, demanding the keys to his offices and storehouses in most abusive language. They searched Quirk's private apartment, forcing Mrs. Quirk to give them Quirk's pistol. Other officers broke open some of the gin houses. As they left with the horses and saddles, they threatened to return the next day, destroy the premises and kill Quirk.

Believing them, Quirk and his family left the next day. In Caracas he applied for and was granted an interview with President Guzman Blanco. But the President was

<sup>9</sup> Loehr to Fish, Apr. 30, 1870, Consular Dispatches from Venezuela, XI.

<sup>10</sup> Morris, 286-290; Quirk to Fish, July 13, 1871, Miscellaneous Letters; Quirk Claim in Papers of Claims Commission, 1903.



no help at all: he admitted with appalling frankness that he could not interfere with or control Alcantara. However, he offered to pen a letter to the bandit and a passport that he, Guzman Blanco, would sign. If Quirk was determined to return to his plantation, it would be advisable for his family to remain in Caracas. Any question of law, justice, or international obligation was shelved for the moment. Alcantara had supported Guzman Blanco since the early days of his rise to political prominence and was to be Guzman Blanco's choice for his successor in 1877.<sup>11</sup>

Friends in Caracas who knew the viciousness of civil strife in Venezuela urged Quirk not to put his life in jeopardy. Quirk accepted the inevitable conclusion that his prosperity in Venezuela had ended. He returned to "Tocoron" to prepare for its abandonment. But even this was dangerous without the permission of Alcantara and Quirk visited him at his headquarters in Turnero, presenting Guzman Blanco's letter. Promptly, on April 27, 1871, Alcantara gave Quirk a certificate of protection that enabled him to liquidate his affairs and get out alive.<sup>12</sup> The liquidation period was far from comfortable. Raiders could be seen at night prowling through the neighboring plantations and the entire countryside lived in a state of excitement and panic.

By order of the local court the houses and immovable property on "Tocoron" were appraised at 21,255 pesos, about half their cost. Property stolen by the soldiers was valued at 1,725 pesos. Quirk disposed of his household furniture at what he contended was a sacrifice of at least \$2,000. Abandoned also was the cotton in the fields, some of it ready to harvest. Quirk estimated that, if he could have worked his 1871 crop, it would have brought \$50,000. Machinery and other farming equipment that could be moved was packed up and sent to Caracas. When all this was accomplished, Quirk set out for the same city accompanied by the ten of his imported employees who had not already fled for their lives.

<sup>11</sup> Marsland, 202; Wise, 93.

<sup>12</sup> Certificate of Gen. Alcantara, Apr. 27, 1871, Encl. K, in Memorial of Quirk to Fish, July 13, 1871, Miscellaneous Letters.

The total loss on "Tocoron" easily exceeded \$100,000. Loehr commented on the calamity as follows: "I always had an idea that Mr. Quirk's enterprise would come to what it has. It is the fate of all useful undertakings in Venezuela for years past and to come."<sup>13</sup>

As soon as Quirk reached Caracas, he presented his case to the United States legation and filed suit in the courts of Venezuela for damages from the Federal government. He had hoped that H. L. Boulton & Company would join with him in this action, inasmuch as they had lost their investment in "Tocoron" plantation, but the company declined. Their principals were British citizens and their holdings so extensive that they had to live in Venezuela.<sup>14</sup> The Boulton concern was the largest of its kind in Venezuela and it doubtless had other ways of compensation. Once his business was finished, Quirk and his family took ship for the United States, probably not much better fixed financially than they had been when they arrived, but certainly far more experienced.

The Confederate laborers, imported to work at "Tocoron," were far less fortunate than their employer. Before he left his plantation, Quirk had tried to help the ten who had stayed with him by appealing to the United States legation in Caracas. They were without funds except what they had earned, he explained, and needed assistance to get home. He begged the legation to request the consulate at La Guaira to send them back home.<sup>15</sup> Since United States Minister James R. Partridge was away, the Danish Consul General, who was in charge of legation affairs, wrote at once to Loehr at La Guaira.

Loehr was not unacquainted with the imported laborers. When they arrived from the Southern states they had visited his office and Quirk had insisted on their registering as United States citizens. Their conduct strained Loehr's patience because the former Confederates had freely ex-

<sup>13</sup> Loehr to Fish, June 19, 1871, Consular Reports from Venezuela, XI.

<sup>14</sup> Quirk to Bayard, June 23, 1885, Miscellaneous Letters.

<sup>15</sup> Quirk to the Consul General of Denmark, Apr. 29, 1871 enclosed in Loehr to Fish, May 8, 1871, Consular Reports from Venezuela, XI.



pressed their hostility to the United States. Full of self-righteousness, Loehr had "kindly but firmly" stopped their "impudence"; he informed them the United States government was the best in the world and someday they would realize it. He would, he added, help them when they needed him. Some months before the attack on "Tocoron," these ardent Confederates began to trickle back to La Guaira, begging to be sent home as they could not live in Venezuela. Some were ill; all were unburdened by cash and full of complaints. Loehr had hoped that Boulton would provide transportation, since the company had been involved in their coming and, according to report, had promised them free passage home. Furthermore, the company was at least part owner of most of the vessels plying between La Guaira and the United States. But most of the responsibility fell on Loehr, a relief job for which Washington provided no funds. He did his best; the sick were sent to the hospital, some were found employment, and passage found for the rest. Loehr was willing to take over the remaining ten, with the heartfelt hope that no more of his countrymen would migrate to Venezuela "until a stable government is established that will favor and protect agriculture."

Provided there were not too many destitute persons, it appeared not to be too difficult to find them passage. Some of the vessels coming into port had to replace members of their crews. The captains of others would usually agree to accept extra persons aboard, provided they worked for their passage and expected no pay when the trip was over. If the men were "destitute seamen" or could qualify as such, American captains were required by law to take two such sufferers for every hundred tons of the ship. Loehr's difficulty was the scarcity of vessels of American registry. He appears to have provided for eight Quirk laborers as seamen. The remaining two were too sick to sail.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, the Quirk family had reached South Carolina early in July, 1871. On the thirteenth a memorial was dis-

<sup>16</sup> Loehr to Fish, May 9, 10, July 15, 1871, *ibid.*, XI. The two laborers returned on the *Patterson*, a Boulton ship, in July, 1871.

patched to the State Department, asking support for his claim against Venezuela. There was no question of the validity of his contention. Minister Partridge, who had already acknowledged the justice of Quirk's appeal, now stated, "It ought also to be added in his favor that though he was during the whole rebellion in the Confederate service, he is one of those who have come to their senses now. . . ."<sup>17</sup>

In November the State Department acted in Quirk's behalf by presenting a claim to Venezuela for the injuries sustained. A year later Venezuela appeared to recognize the claim and to desire a settlement.<sup>18</sup> Diplomatic conversations dragged along for four years without results. Venezuela did not attempt to deny the fact of the attack on Quirk, but tried to shirk responsibility by arguing that the raiders had not been under authorized leadership and that, in addition, Quirk, as Boulton's agent, had no right himself to a claim. However, the company set the record straight by writing William A. Pyle, minister to Venezuela, January 9, 1872, that "Our arrangement with Mr. Quirk was to provide him with sufficient capital which, added to his own, would be sufficient to raise the crop and ship it to Liverpool, the proceeds to be divided equally between us."

In 1903 the United States-Venezuela Claims Commission took up Quirk's claim. Inasmuch as Quirk was now dead, his daughter Frances Irene Quirk Roberts, asked for damages to the amount of \$187,168.03. Venezuela repeated its old position, adding that the claim had been outlawed by the length of time that had elapsed since the outrage on "Tocoron." The contention was rejected, however, and Quirk's heir was declared entitled to compensation on two counts: the property lost, and the fact that Quirk's conduct throughout the strife had been "perfect, impartial, and circumspect" as befitted a foreigner. None of the material presented in support of the Quirk claim specified the amount of his capital that had been invested in his

<sup>17</sup> Partridge to Fish, June 23, 1871, Consular Dispatches from Venezuela, XVIII.

<sup>18</sup> Fish to Quirk, March 9, 1872, Domestic Letters, 93.



plantation; hence, the estimate of his damages was based on his losses and fixed at \$13,154.61. The liability beyond property damage was thought to merit \$5,000—thus, the total award came to \$18,154.61. However, it was at least four years after the award that payment began.<sup>19</sup>

Thus ended, many years after his death in Florence, South Carolina, May 24, 1895, the aftermath of Captain William Quirk's efforts to grow Sea Island cotton in far-away Venezuela. During his last years the old gentleman had lived quietly as station agent for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. To the last he was a faithful, active member of the United States Confederate Veterans.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Morris, 282-290; Assistant Secretary of State Robert Bacon to J. Hubley Ashton, July 2, 1906, Domestic Letters, 291.

<sup>20</sup> Charleston News and Courier, May 26, 1895.

## CHAPTER X

### *The Sixth and Seventh Attempts*

AS EARLY AS 1867 Vice Consul V. K. Mathison at Ciudad Bolivar had written the British Foreign Office concerning the lack of preparation for the care of American immigrants to the Price Grant, explaining that they had been left to founder as best they could in a strange land. Suspicious of AEVCO, in June, 1869 he reported that *Vade-Mecum* was full of inaccuracies and that newspaper comments about the scheme, particularly the statement that cotton was being cultivated by the immigrants on the Paragua River, were "totally devoid of truth."<sup>1</sup> Such criticisms caused the government to take action.<sup>2</sup> Under the direction of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners, of which Sir Thomas W. Clinton was chairman in 1869, Captain Foster, an agent, undertook an investigation. When he interviewed Mrs. Pattison, she promised to refund the passage money to all prospective emigrants who wished to withdraw from the venture. Foster then went to work on as many of the prospective colonists as he could locate, but his words of caution fell on deaf ears. Ship-owners were more sensitive to official hints, it appeared. At any rate, the group found such difficulty in securing passage

<sup>1</sup> Mathison to Joel, June 16, 1869, F. O. 199, Vol. 65; Fred H. Hitchins, *The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, 1840-1878* (Philadelphia, 1931), 110-111, 181. British authorities had often issued warnings against South American immigration schemes.

<sup>2</sup> The "lucrative profession" of "swindling emigrants" was also berated by Charles Dickens, Jr., who wrote that the scanty savings of British emigrants had for too many years been the prey of a "vile tribe of blood suckers and parasites" ("The Last Eden," *All the Year Round*, IV, 37-38 [June 11, 1870]).



that they went over to Germany and chartered a Prussian vessel, the *Fairilee*, in which they sailed from Hamburg for South America on October 6, 1869.<sup>3</sup>

The number of persons in this hapless company, according to Mathison, was sixty-nine.<sup>4</sup> J. Leslie Clark, who sailed on the *Fairilee*, listed sixty-five names, stating that he could not recall "six or seven others." Clark's list was as follows: George Anker, Mrs. Martha Anker, Thomas Bailey, James William Barry, Alfred C. Bates, Mrs. Amelia Bell, Ellen A. Bell, Jesse H. Bell, T. H. Bell, David Blair, Captain and Mrs. Henry H. Bond, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Thomas Chant, Joseph Chapman, James Leslie Clark, Charles Connor, Mrs. E. Connor, John Connor, Mr. and Mrs. M. Cramp, William English, Charles Harrell, Mrs. A. Howarth, Josiah Howarth, Mr. and Mrs. John Hyde, F. Jones, Joseph M. Kaufman, Henry Ketley, William Lloyd, John Lowe, Charles Marshal, Arthur Maxwell, Frances Monk, Miss D. S. Pattison, Joseph Phillips, George Raymer, Mrs. Henrietta Raymer, Henry Raymer, John Raymer, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Reynolds, Hugh Roberts, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Roberts, Adeline Robinson, Alfred G. Robinson, Mrs. Clara Robinson, Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Robinson, Walter Robinson, William Robinson, W. G. Robinson, Mr. and Mrs. M. Sibley, David Syle, Mr. and Mrs. William Henry Taylor, Henry J. War, Alice Wigton, James Fraser Wigton, James T. Wigton, Jr., Mary Ann Wigton, and Robert Wigton.<sup>5</sup> Persons not remembered by Clark were the MacGregor family and George Webb Hull.<sup>6</sup> Both sexes and all ages were represented and most of them were British citizens from the middle and working classes, but a few "good" families had joined the party; of these, Cap-

<sup>3</sup> I. W. C. Murdock to Sir Frederick Rogers, Jan. 26, 1870, F. O. 80, Vol. 204; Thirteenth General Report of Emigration Commissioners (1870), 16; Hitchens, *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> Mathison to Joel, Nov. 30, 1869, F. O. 199, Vol. 65. Other estimates ranged from 69 to 80.

<sup>5</sup> Affidavit of J. Leslie Clark, March 6, 1894, in Memorial of William M. Ladd, Apr. 19, 1895, Miscellaneous Letters, May, 1895, I.

<sup>6</sup> A few settlers failing to get passage on the *Fairilee* sailed for Venezuela later. See Gordon to Granville, March 10, 1879, F. O. 80, Vol. 204.

tain Bond, formerly in Her Majesty's 91st Highlanders, was in charge of the enterprise. All had bought land. They had also paid their own passage, which amounted to considerably more than they had anticipated. Mrs. Bond wrote her brother, Francis Eagle, that she and her husband had already spent £ 84, although Mrs. Pattison had assured them the trip could be made for £ 29.<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Pattison had allowed it to be taken for granted that she would be on the *Fairilee*, but she later withdrew. The town the group intended to found in the Caura River area was to be named "Pattisonville."

Despite the fact that Mrs. Pattison had advertised the nearness of Venezuelan Guyana to Trinidad and British Guyana as "natural allies in the neighborhood," she placed Pattisonville as far away from these areas as possible. The reasons given were that the Caroni had already been settled by Americans (it had not) and that the Caura River was more accessible to Ciudad Bolivar. This argument would have been less specious if Price and Dalla Costa had not fallen out over the issue of developments on the Caroni. More likely, the Pattisons selected the region because that was the location Dalla Costa obviously favored.

Settlers who purchased but ten acres, usually for a down payment of £ 1, were supposed to live in Pattisonville. Holders of large tracts might go wherever the proper amount of land was available. Before leaving England, Mrs. Pattison "sold" the group "luggage passes" that, she promised, would admit all personal belongings free of customs duties.<sup>8</sup>

The difficulties encountered in getting away from England paled before conditions encountered in Guyana, where the colonists arrived November 27, 1869. Their first disillusionment was to discover that the "luggage passes" had no value whatever. Only by Dalla Costa's generosity were their possessions passed duty-free through customs.

<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Henry H. Bond to Francis Eagle, Dec. 30, 1869, enclosed in Francis Eagle to Secretary of State, F. O. 80, Vol. 204.

<sup>8</sup> Questions answered by Mr. Barry and companions, Gordon to Granville, March 10, 1870, F. O. 80, Vol. 204.



AEVCO had advertised that Fred A. Derbyshire was its agent in Ciudad Bolívar. One doubts whether this had been true at any time; it certainly was not true in November, 1869. Neither was there preparation for settlement nor assistance to the settlers. Far worse was Dalla Costa's blunt statement that the Price Grant no longer existed. He agreed to settle the immigrants on vacant lands in the Caura region where they understood they had made their purchases. The lands he designated were in the wilderness some thirty miles from Maripa, a small village that according to Mrs. Bond was inhabited chiefly by runaway slaves from the old Confederate States.<sup>9</sup>

Under Bond's leadership the discomfited settlers left for the Caura River. Dalla Costa gave them provisions for some three months and a package of simple medicines, fever powders, mustard, rhubarb, and bicarbonate of soda. Unfortunately, the canoemen stole a good part of the supplies. When the Caura was reached, there were no tools with which to produce a crop, little or no money, and for shelter only one 10 ft. x 20 ft. palm shed that housed the food and two families. The other colonists protected themselves as best they could by building huts of palms and reeds. Everyone who was not sick worked long days trying to clear the wilderness. Not long afterwards, food gave out and tropical fever made its raids. Protests against the desperate circumstances assumed sizeable proportions. Some settlers wrote home, Mrs. Bond among them. Complaints from relatives began appearing on the desk of the Secretary of State for Colonies. Mathison wrote to the British legation at Caracas and it in turn reported to the Foreign Office. Dalla Costa wrote Trinidad's Governor Arthur Gordon in an attempt to prevent more English immigrants from coming.<sup>10</sup> The Governor of Guyana had paid out some 2,000 pesos in aid and the public treasury would not stand more drains.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See n. 7, above.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon to Granville, March 10, 1870, F. O. 80, Vol. 249.

<sup>11</sup> Mathison to Middleton, Apr. 29, 1870, enclosed in Middleton to Clarendon, June 1, 1870, F. O. 80, Vol. 200, No. 44.

In London the commission returned to its investigation, this time to determine whether or not the Pattisons could be prosecuted under the Passengers Act. Since the colonists had left from Hamburg, not London, no action could be taken beyond attempts to prevent further emigration. This was extremely important because it was certain that Mrs. Pattison would continue to sell land as long as she could find purchasers. Accordingly, notices were inserted in the leading newspapers "describing what had occurred in respect to the emigrants in question and warning all other persons against immigrating to Venezuela."<sup>12</sup>

During the month in which these notices appeared, R. S. C. Middleton, the new British chargé d'affaires at Caracas, received instructions from Lord Clarendon, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, to inform the Venezuelan government that British immigration to Venezuela was being discouraged. Great Britain regretted the necessity of this action but English subjects could not be "exposed to risk by the improvident arrangements and misrepresentations by the parties concerned."<sup>13</sup> Shortly thereafter the London office of AEVCO was closed by Venezuelan Consul Florencio Leander Davis. The pretext was somewhat slim; it was suddenly decided that the privileges of the Price Grant had never been intended to extend to Englishmen—only to Americans.<sup>14</sup>

Early in March, 1870, when Pattisonville had not more than about one week's rations of rice and beans left, four men set out for Trinidad to confer with Governor Gordon. One died on the way, but James William Barry, John Lowe and George Webb Hull reached Port of Spain with the aid of Dalla Costa. By checking the story of the immigrants with the statements and promises contained in *Vade-Mecum* and its abridgment, *Emigration to Venezuelan Guyana*, the Governor unfolded a sorry record. The colonists had been

<sup>12</sup> Thirteenth General Report of Emigration Commissioners (1870), 16; also Emigration Board, Jan. 26, 1870, T. W. C. Murdock to Sir Frederick Rogers, F. O. 80, Vol. 204.

<sup>13</sup> Clarendon to R. S. C. Middleton, Feb. 16, 1870, F. O. 80, Vol. 200, No. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson's Account, 49.



grossly overcharged for the land they thought they had bought. They had paid £ 4 for ten acres, when the market price in Venezuela was £ 4 for three square miles! No arrangements had been made for tools, medicines, provisions or other necessities; nor was there evidence of the "Free Library" solicited by Mrs. Pattison, although *Vade-Mecum* had given an imposing list of contributions. Mrs. Pattison's permit to pass the luggage and effects of the immigrants through the Venezuelan custom house free of duty was a fake and, assertions to the contrary, there had never been an agent of the company in Trinidad. AEVCO had claimed that 100,000 Americans had already settled on the Price Grant—but they were not there. It "really did receive a large grant of land," reported Governor Gordon, "but I understand the grant is now forfeited, owing to the non-fulfillment of its conditions by the Company." He urged that publicity be given his dispatch to alert the British people.<sup>15</sup>

To expedite assistance for the unfortunate English colony, Gordon made a trip to Ciudad Bolívar. He found that Dalla Costa had already started relief measures. Ciudad Bolívar citizens had raised \$1,200 to aid the sufferers on the Caura. By the last of May, 1870 Gordon could assure the British government that all but Bond and a Mr. McGregor with their families, eight persons in all, had been brought to the city. The subscription money would provide them passage home.<sup>16</sup> Twenty persons were salvaged from Pattisonville; of these, all were in poor health and sixteen were hospitalized at once; subsequently, one died.<sup>17</sup> Fifty-six persons had died at the settlement, among them the parents of ten children.<sup>18</sup> By September, 1870 the survivors were back home, most of them destitute.<sup>19</sup> Reports from the commissioners and from Gordon were laid before Parlia-

<sup>15</sup> Dispatch from Governor Gordon of Trinidad March 10, 1870; see also F. O. 80, Vol. 204. Signers of the petition were James W. Barry, John Lowe, and George W. Hull.

<sup>16</sup> Clarendon to Thomas Breveter, June 22, 1870, F. O. 80, Vol. 202.

<sup>17</sup> Middleton to Clarendon, July 1, 1870, F. O. 80, Vol. 202, No. 55.

<sup>18</sup> Joel to A. J. Otway, Aug. 23, 1870, F. O. 80, Vol. 203.

<sup>19</sup> Breveter to Clarendon, June 14, 1870, F. O. 80, Vol. 203.

ment by command of Her Majesty, after having been discussed by the Cabinet.

Charles Dickens, Jr. had the last word on Pattisonville. Satirically, he characterized Price's motives as no mere "sordid commercial yearning for profit" but rather the creation of a haven for Southerners as declaimed by Colonel Belton, "a fervid and 'spanglorious' writer." The sufferings of the British colonists, however, had cast "a slight shadow over the brilliant picture of the great painter, Pattison" in *Vade-Mecum*, "the literary treasure." Dickens concluded wryly, "anybody can die miserably on a more contracted area than ten acres and for less than four pounds."<sup>20</sup>

Long before the handful of disillusioned English settlers straggled back home in 1870, the Pattisons had returned to the United States and were soon working out another scheme for settling Confederates on the Price Grant. Possibly the new expedition was to serve as a trial balloon to see just what the situation was in Venezuela, because they declared they intended to accompany the new group.

A prominent member of this expedition, as well as its best chronicler, was Doctor Thomas S. Waring of South Carolina, an 1853 graduate of the state's medical college and a former assistant surgeon in Longstreet's division of the Army of Northern Virginia. As subordinate agent to the Managing Director of District No. 1 of AEVCO, on April 1, 1869 Waring reported that he was making every effort

<sup>20</sup> *All the Year Round*, IV, 29-40 (June 11, 1870). Thirty years later J. Scott Keltie, in the preface to Eugene André's *A Naturalist in the Guianas* (London, 1904), wrote: "The particular region . . . is doubly interesting as the scene of the adventures and sufferings of the ill-fated party of emigrants from England who were induced by an unscrupulous adventurer [Mrs. Pattison] to try their fortune in this remote part of Venezuela. The enterprise was a hopeless failure, and the story of the dogged struggle of the emigrants against the dangers from man and beast which confronted them, and the other difficulties of the situation, is as thrilling and of as absorbing interest as any production of the imagination. . . ." Keltie added that in 1900 André had seen in Ciudad Bolívar the son of a leading member "of the tragic enterprise, who tells how his father had to go alone a distance of a mile or more with two pails of water, carrying a revolver between his teeth with which to defend himself. . . . No other man of the party was well enough to walk."



to form a good company of immigrants from South Carolina for the Price Grant in Venezuela. On that day he had enrolled thirty immigrants; he hoped to double that number by December 1 and ultimately sign up more than one hundred. Waring's report also explained that there were "very many very excellent and industrious people in this State [South Carolina] who are prevented from going into the enterprise by two reasons: first, they are doubtful of the statements made; and, secondly, they lack means, not being able to sell property except at great sacrifice. . . ." <sup>21</sup>

More than a year later Waring was in New York preparing to sail for Venezuela. However, instead of one hundred immigrants, he had with him but two, Thomas B. Huger and C. O. Fuller. <sup>22</sup> The three paid a total of \$172.87 on May 11, 1870 for passage from New York to Ciudad Bolivar on the brig *Angostura*. <sup>23</sup> From Waring's letters it is evident that he planned on establishing a property in Venezuela and seeing whether or not he wanted to move his family to a new home. He had advocated such a procedure as the best means of stimulating expatriation.

Waring had reached New York on May 9, 1870, after a rough coastwise passage from Charleston. The next day he had met Doctor and Mrs. McGirk of St. Louis and Mr. and Mrs. Pattison. She greeted him warmly, "Why, it is Mr. Waring," just as if he had been an old friend, and declared him to be the image of an especially dear brother. Pattison was equally gracious and promptly appointed Waring one of the company's surveyors. The South Carolinian also discovered he was a stockholder in the enterprise. He was much pleased by both developments, particularly the prospect of being employed as surveyor. "So I go out," he wrote his family on May 10, "booked for work and doubly secure of pay . . . you have no idea how I long to get to work. Work, constant employment, is what I want that the

<sup>21</sup> Thomas S. Waring Papers (University of South Carolina Library, Columbia). Other similar records used in this chapter are located in this collection.

<sup>22</sup> Waring to his wife, May 9, 1870.

<sup>23</sup> The receipt was signed by William H. Halsey, probably the master of the *Angostura*.

time may pass quickly that is to be spent away from you all." However, McGirk was less pleased with his prospects. He had expected more colonists to join him from St. Louis but they had been discouraged, he declared, by "fake reports" circulated by the "radical" United States Consul in Venezuela. Mr. Pattison was "very much provoked," Waring concluded.

Finally, on May 13 the little group of fifteen—three of them women—sailed from New York on the *Angostura* under the leadership of Mrs. Pattison, who insisted she was going out "to settle."

After a voyage of twenty-five days the brig reached the mouth of the Orinoco on June 7. Eight days were passed in ascending the river. Waring was first "depressed" by the jungle, but later pleased with the valleys. As the brig reached Ciudad Bolivar, the countryside reminded him of the Valley of Virginia. He was somewhat startled by the thatched, clay huts of the "Spaniards," the rough palm roofs under which the Indians swung their hammocks, and the scant clothing worn by everyone. A more pleasant surprise was the climate. Although 80° was normal temperature it was cool and refreshing. Seriously ill during the passage, Waring began improving daily.

On June 17 the colonists disembarked at Ciudad Bolivar and called on Governor Dalla Costa, who was courteous and helpful. By this time, by common consent, Waring attended to the business of the group and was very busy. He had numerous conferences with Dalla Costa in the course of which he was offered the job of marking out a road from Ciudad Bolivar to the mining region of Carratel. On Dalla Costa's suggestion the site for settlement was fixed between Las Tablas and Upata in the area of the Caroni. Supplies for the party were acquired from John Dalton "at his store." <sup>24</sup>

With more energy than he was accustomed to display at home—"What of my most abused self will they say now," he wrote his wife on June 24—Waring piloted the party,

<sup>24</sup> Waring Diary, June 16, 17, 21, 1870.



which by June 23 was en route to its destination. Every one and everything moved slowly, he found; the donkey was the only creature who worked. From Las Tablas they worked out over the area, returning each night for about a week before deciding on a site suitable for growing cotton. The site selected was on the Caroni River, midway along the Caroni falls. The lands they decided to cultivate were "church lands occupied by a Spaniard named Garcia who earnestly solicited our taking of the place."<sup>25</sup> The settlement was apparently not to be made on vacant lands. Nearby were located two Americans, a Mr. Wise and a Mr. Morgan with his family.<sup>26</sup> Few if any of the group lived on the land being cultivated; McGirk and his wife lived at the nearby hamlet of Algaroba; Waring, at "San Felice" (San Felix), four miles away.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the fact that the cotton and the corn were beginning to come up, with prospects for a good crop, Waring's taste for Guyana faded. Part of his disillusionment was due to loneliness and lack of any mail from home, but Venezuela itself depressed him also. He considered the natural resources overrated. The forests were full of "miserable and useless timber" in which the only living "thing to be found in any numbers is the howling monkey." As for the comforts of civilization, they did not exist. "I do not believe there is a bed in the state and as for a pair of gloves, I do not recall as yet to have seen any." Life was primitive in other ways. His party had been terrified by a "donkey caravan" and their murderous-looking drivers. On another occasion Waring had himself scattered a donkey caravan by putting up his umbrella. There was a "fund of wealth lying idle and scattered about in this country" but he was not interested in collecting it. "The want of refinement is too gross, the indolence, discomfort and ignorance of the people too troublesome, too revolting—I could not

<sup>25</sup> Waring to his wife, July 1, 1870.

<sup>26</sup> A William L. Morgan, his wife and children had arrived in Guyana on the first voyage of the *Ben Willis* in 1867. This may have been the same family.

<sup>27</sup> Waring to his wife, July 21, 1870.

bring my family to be raised or to live here," he wrote his parents on July 5, 1870. He expected to be home back in South Carolina by December at the latest. However, the venture had given him one bonus: he believed he was completely restored to health.

Had Waring spent more time at Ciudad Bolivar, he would have been forced to except the capital from his picture of Venezuelan primitiveness. While Captain Johnson had waited at Ciudad Bolivar for the *Pioneer* to sail for Port of Spain, a period that had included the inauguration of Juan Bautista Dalla Costa as governor and the celebration of Easter, 1867, he had observed the cultivated charm of the people, the luxuries of their life, and the elegance of their dress. Nearly all the gentlemen at the inaugural ceremonies wore white kid gloves and patent leather boots. The trouble was, of course, that there was only one Ciudad Bolivar in Guyana.

Mrs. Pattison also found conditions far from her liking. They were vastly different from the way she had described them in her book. She intended to visit Caracas but had no chance of getting there because revolution was running rampant and Guzman Blanco's party was behaving "like sanguinary devils." Thus, frustrated, Mrs. Pattison was also ready to leave Venezuela and, as Waring wrote his parents, "This I fear will be the death blow to the Price Grant business though I think it could be made a claim of individuals against the government."

Not all of the *Angostura's* party returned to the United States as early as Waring. McGirk settled at Port of Spain.<sup>28</sup> Among the Waring Papers is part of a letter bearing no date and no signature but evidently from a former colleague of Waring in Venezuela. The writer had been eight months in Guyana. He and his companions were well which was lucky for there was not a doctor within twenty miles. Whenever the settlers felt under the weather, they drank lemonade. There were quantities of lemon trees growing wild. "If Doctor Waring were here he would make

<sup>28</sup> Johnson's Account, 35-40.



something out of the thousands of bushels of lemons going to waste."<sup>29</sup>

The seven trips to the Price Grant that have been discussed—namely, that of the *Elizabeth*, two each by both the *United States* and the *Ben Willis*, and those of the *Fairilee* and the *Angostura*, were the only organized groups for which evidence has been unearthed. Others, stimulated by the Price publicity, may have gone out to Venezuela on their own. The gold mines lured many men and doubtless drained off some whom Price might have interested. In 1867 Loehr estimated that:

Hundreds of people of our Southern States immigrated from New Orleans to Ciudad Bolivar last year, allured by false reports to the mines of Guyana. All appear to have been sadly disappointed, and while a great number of them have already returned to their old homes, the remainder arrive at this port [La Guaira] in a most deplorable condition. I do not wonder about this failure: similar results have been and will yet be seen in this country."

With more partisanship than Christian brotherhood, he hoped that Southerners rather than good Union citizens would set out to chase the glittering mirage.<sup>30</sup>

But destitute prospectors, coming home with their pockets turned inside out, would not boost the zeal of compatriots to gamble their futures on the Price Grant.

<sup>29</sup> Undated, unsigned fragment of letter in Waring Papers.

<sup>30</sup> Loehr to Seward, Oct. 10, 1866, Oct. 4, 1867, Consular Reports from Venezuela, IX, X.

## CHAPTER XI

### *The End of the Price Grant*

ON NOVEMBER 22, 1869 Henry M. Price informed President Ulysses S. Grant he had heard "by private means" that Venezuela was about to abrogate his grant in Guyana. If this should happen, he added, he wanted compensation. Then, he asked help from the State Department, albeit in a somewhat condescending manner. He "preferred this method to an appeal to force," although he was "confident" that under the circumstances he could in sixty days raise a force in this country and England to compel recognition of his every right from the Venezuelan government. Nevertheless, he was no filibusterer and would rely for protection on the United States.<sup>1</sup>

In the extensive correspondence and memorials that went from Price to the State Department, the President, and to Congress for the next thirty-odd years, he never was specific about the source of his information. On one occasion he stated that he had not received any communications directly from Venezuela and no action had arisen in the courts as the Price Grant had stipulated. Another time he admitted that he had tried to get an explanation from Florencio Ribas, his friend, but all had been silence.<sup>2</sup>

Late in 1869 Secretary of State Hamilton Fish instructed Minister James R. Partridge at Caracas to investigate the statements in Price's letter. Partridge replied with such speed that one questions the thoroughness of his efforts.

<sup>1</sup> Miscellaneous Letters, Nov. 1869.

<sup>2</sup> Price to Blaine, Nov. 4, 1881, *ibid.*, Nov., 1881, I; *Congressional Record*, XIX (4), 3115-3116 (Apr. 19, 1888).



Most of his information came from Ribas, then back in Venezuela, with whom he had discussed the Price Grant. According to Partridge, "provisional privilege was granted by the Executive of Venezuela—13th of September 1865—to Henry M. Price and others to colonize all vacant lands which may be found in the State of Guyana and the District of Amazonas under certain conditions. The privilege was never confirmed by the Congress for the reason, among others, that the said Price had never complied with the conditions. . . . Mr. Ribas now tells me that . . . this Government now recognizes no claim whatever." The conditions stated that controversies concerning the Price Grant could not be grounds for international intervention. To give point to his report, Partridge enclosed a copy of *Vade-Mecum*.<sup>3</sup> Fish sent this information to Price and, so far as the Grant Administration was concerned, the issue was closed.<sup>4</sup>

However, Price never accepted these arguments. As a matter of fact, the Venezuelan position remains cloudy even to this day. If Price and his associates understood the "Grant Conditions" as a "provisional privilege," they gave no evidence thereof either in the promotional literature or in their personal writings. On a broadside of the Venezuelan Land Company used by Price for writing W. J. Wiley on January 5, 1867, "June 9, 1866" is written on the "Grant Conditions" in longhand as the date of ratification.<sup>5</sup> The letter from Ribas, mentioned earlier, also contained an assertion that the grant had been ratified "by the Venezuelan Government in June, 1866."<sup>6</sup>

In 1895 a memorial was presented to the State Department in support of Price's claim against Venezuela. Among the enclosures submitted as evidence were two items bearing on ratification, one listing extracts from the Resuelto of June 26, 1866, on which June 9, 1866 is given as the date

<sup>3</sup> Partridge to Fish, Jan. 15, 1870, dispatches from Venezuela, XVIII, No. 55.

<sup>4</sup> Feb. 28, 1870, Domestic Letters, LXXXIII, 351.

<sup>5</sup> Miscellaneous Letters, Jan., 1867, I.

<sup>6</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 87.

of ratification; the other was a communication from Ribas, dated August 10, 1866, in which both the Resuelto of September 13, 1865 and the Resuelto of June 26, 1866 are discussed. Ribas stated, "By the second one it is a law that the National Executive authorized by the Constitution and the Legislature of the Nation has given to Doctor Price this Grant for the colonization of these territories."<sup>7</sup> The 1866 Resuelto as it now exists, however, contains no mention of ratification in any form.

Ribas' statement may have been the basis of Colonel Belton's assertion in the *Metropolitan Record* . . . , November 23, 1866, that the Price Grant was "ratified and perfected on the 26th of June last."<sup>8</sup> There is evidence in the Venezuelan Archives to support the belief that the Price Grant proposition was submitted to the Venezuelan Congress. The *Memorias de los Ministerios de Venezuela* contain a discussion of the Price Grant proposition to which the government had "made as many concessions as compatible with our laws. . . . The task for which it asks the aid of the Congress cannot be nobler nor can it promise surer and more brilliant results."<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, it must be remembered that a conventional contract between the Venezuelan government and Price was not made, but that the "Conditions" on which such a contract could be negotiated was countersigned by Ribas and used by Price and his companies as the contract. This may be the crux of the confusion concerning ratification. The Congress did not have a conventional contract for its consideration. It had only the conditions on which the executive was willing to make a contract. This immigration enterprise was strongly advocated by the executive and probably endorsed by Congress; hence, the executive and the ministers proceeded to clarify their policies by the Resuelto of June 26, 1866.

It is impossible to believe that the Congress would oppose an executive who was a virtual dictator. Furthermore,

<sup>7</sup> Memorial of William M. Ladd, Apr. 19, 1895, Miscellaneous Letters, May, 1895, I, Encl. 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> *Vade-Mecum*, 13.

<sup>9</sup> *Memorias de los Ministerios de Venezuela*, 1866, Vol. No. 2878, pp. 38-40.



immigration had been habitually favored for some years. In 1869 the Congress authorized the executive to make contracts for immigration to the vacant regions of the Republic and to send agents to the United States, Great Britain and other countries to this end.<sup>10</sup>

Thus it appears likely that the presentation of the project to the Congress and the subsequent clarifying resolution of the executive was reported in the United States and accepted by Price as something more formally legal than it actually was. Government processes in the Venezuela of the 1860's did not function meticulously by "due process of law."

The departure from New Orleans of the first settlers to the Price Grant was officially recorded in Caracas in 1867.<sup>11</sup> Dalla Costa's communication to Captain Johnson, previously discussed, accepted the Price Grant as genuine. In fact, the Governor paid 1,250 pesos from the customs in immigrant aid. Apparently Venezuelans had not questioned the existence of the Price Grant. When the English immigrants and, later, Governor Gordon of Trinidad were told that the Price Grant no longer functioned, the reason given was not that it had never been legal but that its terms had not been fulfilled.

In the years when Price was trying to salvage some compensation, he attempted to carry on a correspondence with various Venezuelan officials in both Caracas and Washington. He never received any satisfaction from them, but it does not appear that he was told that the Price Grant was invalid. One official even hinted darkly that, if he still had land in Guyana, he was liable to large sums in back taxes. Price did not belabor the question of the legal status of the grant with the State Department. His whole contention centered around the fulfillment issue.

Minister Partridge, in his report to Secretary Fish, mentioned the plight of the English settlers as a contributing factor to the grant's demise. Price always denied responsibility for these people; he insisted that they ar-

<sup>10</sup> Loehr to Fish, May 31, 1869, Consular Reports from La Guaira, XI, No. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Memoria del Ministerio de Fomento para 1867, 31.

rived when he was ill at his home and, therefore, out of company participation. Furthermore, there had been the balance of the 10,000 pesos provided by Venezuela to aid colonization. The British Consul at Ciudad Bolivar should have known of this.<sup>12</sup> The statement is not well taken either by Partridge or Price. The British colonists were told on arrival that the Price Grant had already ceased to exist. Although British officials had powerful influence in Caracas, it cannot be said that they started a move against the Price Grant because of the sufferings of their nationals.

Therefore, attention must be focused on the period prior to the *Fairilee's* arrival late in 1869. Price's one argument for the fulfillment of the grant was the arrival of Johnson and fifty-one colonists in March, 1867, but just as "one swallow doesn't make a summer" so fifty-one persons did not colonize the vacant lands of Guyana, especially when within four months four had died and nineteen had gone home. The groups, which evidence proves went to Guyana, were small; some of their number went to inspect land rather than to settle and many who planned to stay returned home. In spite of claims made in *Vade-Mecum* and elsewhere there was no organized agency in Guyana to assist and supply the incoming settlers. Had there been any agent in any organized settlement when the English party arrived on the *Fairilee*, they would not have been thrown entirely on the generosity of Dalla Costa. The party of which Waring was a member met the same situation. Had it been otherwise, Waring would surely have mentioned it. Even the two Americans he met in the Caroni area he did not identify as colonists to the Price Grant although, judging from his name, one of them might have been. The Price Grant enterprise had not taken fire no matter how many plans, broadsides, or books had been issued. Price's own trip to Venezuela had been a humiliating fiasco. To insist that a concession of the dimensions of the Price Grant, both in geographic extent and economic privileges, could be maintained indefinitely by the specified number of colonists

<sup>12</sup> Price to Blaine, June 15, 1881, Miscellaneous Letters, June, 1881, II.



arriving within the specified time, when subsequent activities of the grantee were inconsequential, was not a strong contention.

Price claimed he had spent five years in the service of his project, three of them recovering from malaria, and that his expenditures were \$100,000.<sup>13</sup> If this was more than an off-the-cuff estimate, one wonders how the money was spent; there was so little to show for it. He later testified that 11,250 shares in AEVCO were held in the United States, half in Virginia.<sup>14</sup> Some stock must have been sold in England and Confederates who migrated to Guyana received stock, at least occasionally. Waring, much to his surprise, was informed by Pattison that he was a stockholder. Probably, the number of shares held by any one individual was not large. In his 1888 memorial to Congress Price listed the names of the "large stockholders" who had been associated in the preparation of the petition. The amounts of stock they held varied from fifty to 250 shares.<sup>15</sup>

Factors in Venezuela had a bearing on the history of the Price Grant. Price often reiterated that British influence worked against him; that after British capitalists failed in their efforts to buy him out, they set about trying to freeze him out.<sup>16</sup> Official records of the Foreign Office do not substantiate this charge. The British authorities at Ciudad Bolivar reported the coming of Price settlers and criticized their mismanagement, but the only protest to the Venezuelan government of which there is evidence was occasioned by the sufferings of English citizens in 1869. Whether private British individuals, the "Gold Adventurers," tried to discredit the Price Grant cannot be proved; Price gave no evidence for his charges. Of course, the Price Grant did extend to vacant lands, reportedly rich in gold,

<sup>13</sup> Price to Cleveland's Private Secretary, March 20, 1885, *ibid.*, March, 1885, I.

<sup>14</sup> Price to Richard Olney, Jan. 1, 1896, *ibid.*, Jan. 1896, I.

<sup>15</sup> *Congressional Record*, XIX (4), 3115-3116 (Apr. 19, 1888).

<sup>16</sup> Price to Evarts, June 11, 1878, Miscellaneous Letters, June, 1878, I; Price to Blaine, June 5, 1881; *ibid.*, June, 1881, I; Price to Cleveland's Private Secretary, March 20, 1885, *ibid.*, March, 1885, II.

lying within the area of dispute between Venezuela and Great Britain.

Possibly the Price Grant was lumped indiscriminately in British minds with the influx of gold-seekers and other entrepreneurs from the United States. The United States consulate at La Guaira reported frequently on the American activities in gold prospecting.<sup>17</sup> The United States Minister maintained that in 1867 there were more Americans at Ciudad Bolivar than in all the rest of Venezuela.<sup>18</sup> The British Vice Consul took note of this gold rush, remarking that Venezuelans being what they were, the Americans would doubtless be the ones to profit from the gold mines.<sup>19</sup> In addition to mining operations Americans began to show an interest in developing new transportation lines with Guyana. All these enterprises could not have pleased British interests since most of the Orinoco trade was with Trinidad and British Guyana (Georgetown).

One wonders how Juan Bautista Dalla Costa regarded this American infiltration. Under the Dalla Costa brothers, Guyana enjoyed the most stable and peaceful government of any section of Venezuela. Ciudad Bolivar was the prosperous center of the Orinoco trade. The import and export duties collected in 1867 totalled almost \$400,000.<sup>20</sup> That he had no intention of allowing these profits to be drained off was demonstrated by the ruthless squelching of Price's determination to build Las Tablas into a competing emporium of trade.

Furthermore, Guyana was the object of hostility in the eyes of North Venezuelan revolutionists. The Dalla Costas succeeded amazingly well in keeping factional strife out of their territory. Waring said the turmoils of revolution appeared as remote from Guyana as a European war.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Loehr to F. W. Seward, Aug. 31, 1867, Consular Reports from La Guaira, X; Loehr to Fish, Aug. 31, Sept. 30, 1869, *ibid.*, XI.

<sup>18</sup> Wilson to Seward, May 1, 1867, Dispatches from Venezuela, XV.

<sup>19</sup> Fagan to Lord Stanley, Apr. 9, 1867, F. O. 80, Vol. 185, No. 27.

<sup>20</sup> Loehr to Fish, Sept. 30, 1870, Consular Reports from La Guaira, XI.

<sup>21</sup> Waring to "My dear Parents," July 5, 1870, Thomas S. Waring Papers.



Such peaceful neutrality, while strife tortured the rest of the country, coupled with the prospect of increased wealth from the influx of American developers, stirred the jealousy of the factional chieftains at Caracas. Various pressures were put on Dalla Costa and, in 1871, he was forced to suppress outright conspiracy.<sup>22</sup> The idea that extensive immigration might bode ill for Venezuelan solidarity early occurred to the British chargé d'affaires and the same thought troubled the Venezuelan government.<sup>23</sup> It might even precipitate a move for the independence of Guyana from the United States of Venezuela.<sup>24</sup>

Another hazard for the security of any contract with foreigners was the constant confusion in the government. At the same time that interest was professed in attracting immigration, political conditions made it dangerous for new settlers to come. James Wilson, the United States minister, declared in 1867 that "The Republic is simply an organized anarchy." The treasury was empty and everyone from ministers to clerks had not been paid for seven months.<sup>25</sup> A year later, Thomas N. Stillwell, Wilson's successor, told Seward the same story. Government affairs "have become each day more gloomy and uncertain." Half the improved land was uncultivated because laborers had been impressed into the armies of various factions. The Cabinet changed so often that it was impossible to tell who was in and who was out. Stillwell likened the Venezuelan government to bandetti.<sup>26</sup>

The rising political luminary in the Venezuelan sky was Antonio Guzman Blanco. According to Richard Edwards, British chargé d'affaires at Caracas, he had not been impressed by the Price project when it was first considered. In August, 1865 he had dubbed it a "ridiculous proposal."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Loehr to Fish, May 31, 1871, Consular Reports from La Guaira, XI.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Edwards to Lord Russell, Aug. 24, 1865, F. O. 80, Vol. 172, No. 68.

<sup>24</sup> Loehr to F. W. Seward, Aug. 31, 1867, Consular Reports from La Guaira, X.

<sup>25</sup> Wilson to Seward, Jan. 31, 1867, Dispatches from Venezuela, XV.

<sup>26</sup> Feb. 6, 1868, *ibid.*, XV.

<sup>27</sup> Edwards to Lord Russell, Aug. 24, 1865, F. O. 80, Vol. 172, No. 68.

Adding all these currents and cross currents to the general ineffectiveness of the Price operations, it is easy to see why the Price Grant faded away in Venezuela without apparent regret to anyone.

But in the United States it did not fade away so easily. Neither Price nor his associates regarded it as merely a venture in colonization; economic concessions were equally important and likely to be far more profitable. As Price later put it, wealth gained from such enterprises would compensate for colonization costs.<sup>28</sup> It was this aspect of the enterprise that Johnson and Pattison tried to keep alive. After 1869 Price appeared to know little or nothing of these activities.

During the period when Price was seriously ill as a result of his trip to Guyana, John A. Doll was persuaded to take from the bank in Scottsville, in Price's name, all the papers pertaining to the grant and to AEVCO. Since Doll was an agent of the company, this act was easily accomplished. The only flaw in the transaction was that Price was not informed and did not find it out until some eighteen years later.<sup>29</sup> Pattison possessed himself of the papers; Johnson, by virtue of his status as agent in the Mississippi area, had copies of the documents.<sup>30</sup> James L. Clark testified in 1894 that Pattison had the original papers as long as he lived and, at his death, his effects were lost.<sup>31</sup> A letter from Pattison to Johnson substantiates the fact of possession.<sup>32</sup> There is no evidence of intent to defraud Price; had the company been successfully revived, he would have benefitted with the others.

Johnson had never approved the management and policies of either the Venezuela Company or its successor, AEVCO. He did not believe in maintaining the Southern character

<sup>28</sup> Price to Cleveland's Private Secretary, March 20, 1885, Miscellaneous Letters, March, 1885, II.

<sup>29</sup> Price to Thomas F. Bayard, Apr. 4, 1888, *ibid.*, Apr., 1888, I; Price to Blaine, Nov. 12, 1889, *ibid.*, Nov., 1889, I.

<sup>30</sup> Price to Blaine, Dec. 12, 1891, *ibid.*, Dec., 1891, II.

<sup>31</sup> Memorial of William M. Ladd, Apr. 19, 1895, Encl. 8, *ibid.*, May, 1895, I.

<sup>32</sup> Nov. 8, 1875, *ibid.*, Nov., 1875.



of the enterprise, so dear to Price's heart, or allowing it to pass under the control of the British. Johnson declared that the enterprise should draw men and capital from the states of the Union and receive aid from the United States itself.<sup>33</sup> He wrote to Secretary of State Seward in this vein in early 1869, sending it through Senator William Pitt Kellogg of Louisiana. Johnson claimed that he addressed Seward because of "appreciation of your talents and confidence in your patriotism as an advocate of our form of government as being the *best* yet arrived at for the benefit of mankind."

Following this none too subtle compliment, Johnson warmed to his real reason for writing, namely, to give information of "one of the most praiseworthy movements to advance our commerce and assist in a legitimate way, a sister Republic." This "most praiseworthy movement" was the Price Grant. Thereupon, Johnson sketched the voyage of the *Elizabeth*, emphasizing the fact that he had hoisted the "*American Colors*" on arriving at the Orinoco. He related his struggle with the "*Old board of directors*" to broaden the application of the Grant to "*all the inhabitants of Europe and the United States and that any political opinions in favor of those worsted by the issue of the late war should be dropped.*" His motive for this contest, in which he had been triumphant, was to be the instrument of carrying out "an idea of my boyhood, viz, the concentration of the *Western Hemisphere* into a galaxy of bright Republican States—and the controlling by the United States of the immense and valuable commerce of that rich country." The proposition had now reached the point where it must have the "favor" of the United States. Further to enlighten the Secretary, numerous pages removed from *Vade-Mecum* were enclosed. Price probably knew of this letter.<sup>34</sup> Years later, when he discovered the "theft" of the papers, his first reaction was that copies must be in the State Department because he had asked Johnson to send them.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Johnson's Account, 43-45.

<sup>34</sup> Jan. 31, 1869, Miscellaneous Letters, Jan., 1869, I.

<sup>35</sup> Price to Blaine, Nov. 12, 1889, *ibid.*, Nov., 1889, I.

The year 1869 brought many disappointments. Seward ignored the bait temptingly spread before him and went out of office on March 4. Benjamin P. Van Court died in La Guaira in the spring, and before the year was over the grant itself was reported to be void. AEVCO disappeared as an active operation in 1870. But the "idea of my boyhood" lingered in Johnson's mind and flourished as trade expansion and potential markets absorbed the interest of New Orleans and other cities along the Mississippi. Although Johnson was then employed in the office of Major Benjamin F. Flanders of New Orleans, he tried to carry on where Van Court had left off in his attempt to establish trade connections between the Mississippi River cities and Venezuela. He "proposed to use the powers" vested in him to benefit his "commercially educated fellow citizens who are unable to obtain lucrative employment." He placed the "matter before the most intelligent of our citizens" and hoped to reach Venezuelans by publications in the Spanish language. He planned "to await cooperative assistance of the merchant and capitalist to bring our advantages to realization without regard for personal gain or advancement." Those who had sailed with him on the *Elizabeth* could have new land warrants for the old ones issued them.<sup>36</sup>

By the summer of 1875 "cooperative assistance" seemed to have progressed to the point of chartering in Missouri a new company, called the Mississippi and Orinoco Company. This organization, which had a capital stock of \$250,000 divided into 50,000 shares of \$50.00 each, purported to trade with Trinidad, the Orinoco and its tributaries and such other places as seemed desirable.<sup>37</sup> Directors were named for the first year and among them were Frederick A. Johnson and James L. Clark, who had returned to St. Louis after his ventures in London and Guyana. He became the secretary of the new company. Johnson must have returned to St. Louis also, because the charter mentioned that all the directors resided in that city. Some fifteen years later Clark

<sup>36</sup> Johnson's Account, 49-50.

<sup>37</sup> Charter of Mississippi and Orinoco Co., 1875 (in Office of the Secretary of State of Missouri, Columbia).



informed Price that the corporation had actually collected \$4,500 through stock sales.<sup>38</sup>

Possibly through Clark, who, it will be remembered, was a nephew of Mrs. Pattison, contact was made with James F. Pattison, who had taken himself to Trinidad to set up an office at 76 Queen Street, Port of Spain, and to wait "for something to turn up." The Mississippi and Orinoco Company appeared to be that "something." He wrote Johnson on November 8, 1875 that he shared his views about the "future prosperity connected with this Company and the old Company." When the time came to consider the business of the "old Company," Pattison warned, "I want you to bear in mind that I have in my possession all the documents and powers connected with the same. . . ." It would seem that if the new company had achieved some success, efforts might have been made to reactivate the Price Grant.<sup>39</sup>

But nothing came of this "future prosperity." Pattison died in 1876 while on a trip from Las Tablas to the Carratel gold fields.<sup>40</sup> His wife, who was waiting for him in British Guyana, stayed on in Georgetown until her death on July 3, 1881.<sup>41</sup> The effects of neither were ever recovered. Meanwhile, Johnson went back into government service. In 1877 he became inspector of customs at New Orleans,<sup>42</sup> a position he held until his death on September 28, 1887.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Price to Blaine, Dec. 12, 1891, Miscellaneous Letters, Dec., 1891, I, Encl. 1.

<sup>39</sup> See n. 31, 32, above.

<sup>40</sup> Affidavit of J. Leslie Clark; see n. 31, above.

<sup>41</sup> Death Certificate No. 5649, British Guiana Register of Deaths in Division No. 28, County of Demerara, 1881. Mrs. Pattison was registered as a citizen of the United States and was 63 years of age.

<sup>42</sup> Johnson to Secretary of Treasury, Aug. 21, 1877, U. S. Treasury Department, General Records, Group 56.

<sup>43</sup> New Orleans *Picayune*, Sept. 29, 1887.

## CHAPTER XII

### *Price and the State Department*

EVERY ADMINISTRATION FROM Grant's to McKinley's, a period of thirty-odd years, corresponded with Henry M. Price concerning the Price Grant. Price had once written Secretary Blaine that he would fight for his interests "as long as he lived"<sup>1</sup> and defend his claim "even against the devil."<sup>2</sup> That is precisely what he did.

As the years passed—Price was over eighty when his efforts ceased—his memory for details slipped. The *Elizabeth* on which the Johnson party had sailed became the *Isabella*,<sup>3</sup> and the date of the ratification of the grant became August instead of June, 1866.<sup>4</sup> But the basic story remained the same. And the events that were described over and over in his memorials, his letters, the writings of his associates, especially when they check with other sources, may be accepted as facts.

Soon after his siege of the State Department commenced, Price appeared to believe that the fact that he was a former Confederate was damaging to his case. The truculence of his letter to President Grant disappeared: he no longer threatened to use force, if refused help. Instead he became increasingly devoted to the Union. Because he was a "Southern man," he once wrote President Rutherford B. Hayes, Grant had done nothing for him. He believed that Hayes was not "sectional" in his point of view.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nov. 12, 1889, Miscellaneous Letters, Nov., 1889, II.

<sup>2</sup> Jan. 21, 1891, *ibid.*, II.

<sup>3</sup> Price to Blaine, Dec. 12, 1891, *ibid.*, Dec., 1891, II.

<sup>4</sup> Price to John Hay, Dec. 21, 1900, *ibid.*, Dec., 1900, II.

<sup>5</sup> June 4, 1878, *ibid.*, June, 1878, I.



Disappointed in Hayes's supposed friendliness to the South, Price passed on to President James A. Garfield. Now that "a different and better feeling exists toward the poor Rebs," he wrote, he hoped his case would be considered. He had always been a Union man at heart and "only took arms from the fact that he believed his allegiance was due his mother state before the General Confederation of States."<sup>6</sup> When Garfield's life hung in the balance, Price directed his attention to James G. Blaine, Secretary of State. "There is now," he insisted, "a perfect accord and unanimity in favor of his [Garfield's] administration among every class. All now respect him as a good man, love him as a good Christian and feel entire confidence in his administration for the future." Price waited anxiously for reports of the President's condition; "if unfavorable, a gloom is present on my face; if favorable, joy is shed forth,"<sup>7</sup> he wrote Blaine. Two months earlier he had written he had aided two Union soldiers during the late war. One, reputed to be a spy, he had defended singlehanded "from hundreds of our exasperated men until aided by the officer of the Day and Guard." At another time he had protected a "Union bushwacker against an entire company of Charlotte Cavalry."<sup>8</sup> To Thomas F. Bayard, Grover Cleveland's Secretary of State who had been born in Wilmington, Delaware, he appealed "as a Southern man . . . whose kindly heart will beat responsive to any appeal from an American and Southerner. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

By the end of Cleveland's first term, Price (or more likely several thousand Virginia shareholders who had committed the error of risking their money in AEVCO) had attracted the attention of the Virginia delegation to Congress. From then on Price did not need to describe his innate Union sympathies. When political interests turned in his direction, he had less reason to complain of "the diplomatic snubbing of subordinates" of the State Department. He was never to

<sup>6</sup> May 28, 1881, *ibid.*, May, 1881, III.

<sup>7</sup> Aug. 11, 1881, *ibid.*, Aug. 1881, I.

<sup>8</sup> June 5, 1881, *ibid.*, June, 1881, I.

<sup>9</sup> March 21, 1885, *ibid.*, March, 1885, II.

achieve the satisfaction he sought, but he did receive attention.

Price's wants or demands from the United States varied. After his first letter to Grant he never envisaged a restoration of the Price Grant in its entirety. Until 1888 he appeared to be working alone because he made no mention of any of his associates. From Hayes he asked for a demand on Venezuela to arbitrate his claim. He was willing to release the government from responsibility for its "Arbitrary act" in return for \$100,000 or a perpetual annuity for himself and his heirs and that portion of the original grant lying east of the Caroni River and its tributaries, including the gold mines. Such a settlement was to be guaranteed by the United States.<sup>10</sup> Secretary William M. Evarts answered on June 20, 1878 that his predecessor, Hamilton Fish, had expressed the decision of the State Department. No new facts had been brought to light.<sup>11</sup> Price pleaded with Secretary Blaine for recognition of his case, but Blaine declined. The United States would not reconsider its position until Price met its objections. Differences between citizens and foreign countries, he explained, were not regarded as international matters and, as in the case of the Price Grant, they were specifically allocated to the courts of Venezuela.<sup>12</sup>

But Blaine was unaware of the nature of his correspondent. Brushing aside any reference to the Venezuela courts, Price assumed that the objections mentioned related to the difficulties of the English colonists. Thereupon he began explaining why he could not be held personally responsible for that wretched episode, concluding with the assertion that the State Department had agreed to take up his claim, if he could prove he had not neglected the British settlers.<sup>13</sup> Not quite knowing how it got there, the State Department now found itself in the position of having promised to do some-

<sup>10</sup> Price to Evarts, June 11, 1878, *ibid.*, June, 1878, I.

<sup>11</sup> Domestic Letters, CXXIII, 319.

<sup>12</sup> June 11, 1881, *ibid.*, CXXXVIII, 4.

<sup>13</sup> June 15, 1881, Miscellaneous Letters, June, 1881, II; Aug. 11, 1881, *ibid.*, Aug., 1881, I; Nov. 4, 1881, *ibid.*, Nov., 1881, I.



thing it never intended to do for reasons it had never advanced. Where, it demanded, was there any such letter of agreement?<sup>14</sup> In reply, Price inquired blandly from the new Secretary of State, Frederick T. Frelinghuysen, how his case was coming along, intimating that Blaine had been a bit disappointing.<sup>15</sup> Frelinghuysen put his foot down firmly—there was no letter on file obligating the State Department to open his case and Price had not produced one.<sup>16</sup>

Undaunted, Price subsided until after the election of Grover Cleveland, a Democrat. To the new administration he sent a "Petition of Redress," asking compensation for the arbitrary abrogation of the Price Grant as well as personal damages for the way he had been sent home from Ciudad Bolívar, sick with fever, on a shipload of hides.<sup>17</sup>

Secretary Thomas F. Bayard was no more malleable than his predecessors. He explained to Price that three administrations prior to Cleveland's had deemed it inappropriate for international intervention. "I have not been able to discover in the papers before me any good reason for a departure from the Department's former position in regard to the claim."<sup>18</sup> By now, however, Price believed he had found an answer to his troubles in a story in the New Orleans *Picayune* which reported that the Orinoco Valley might be ceded to the United States. Price was overjoyed. If the State Department wanted any information, he would be pleased to give it, he wrote, for he had explored the region extensively. Besides, the Caroni was the finest area for a railroad to Brazil and Bolivia; it would mean a commerce of thirty million a year.<sup>19</sup>

The reply that went out at once over the Secretary's signature was tersely firm: "I am aware of no desire on

<sup>14</sup> Hunter to Price, Nov. 9, 1881, Domestic Letters, CXXXIX, 526.

<sup>15</sup> Feb. 27, 1882, Miscellaneous Letters, Feb., 1882, II.

<sup>16</sup> March 2, 1882, Domestic Letters, CXXXI, 110.

<sup>17</sup> Price to Cleveland's Private Secretary, March 20, 1885, Miscellaneous Letters, March, 1885, II.

<sup>18</sup> Apr. 18, 1885, Domestic Letters, CLV, 139.

<sup>19</sup> Apr. 21, 1885, Miscellaneous Letters, Apr. 1885, III.

the part of Venezuela to thus dispose of her territory."<sup>20</sup> And on Price's original letter was penciled, "Some answer to keep him quiet."

Next, Price made an appeal directly to Caracas. Under Guzman Blanco, Venezuela had made the closest approach to stability that she had experienced for decades. The terms Price offered were a composite of his own claims and his future plans—25,000 "Land Warrants" were to be given him to replace those he had already issued and, as personal damages, he would receive 5,000 square miles along the Caroni River. A new company, the South American Railroad and Telegraph Company, was to be incorporated by Venezuela, the members of which would be Price and forty others, ten of them Venezuelans. In return for building a railroad from La Guaira to the Caroni and the Brazilian frontier—the idea was to place its terminus in Rio de Janeiro—the company would receive 32,800 acres for each mile. As a feeder for the road a steamship line would be established from New York or Newport News to La Guaira and the Orinoco. Price sent a copy of these terms to Secretary Bayard. He hoped the plan would be satisfactory and that justice would be done at last. Many persons who would benefit from the project "are warm political if not personal friends of the Administration and whom you would not like to disoblige in any personal favor asked."<sup>21</sup>

The State Department acknowledged receipt of the terms but insisted that neither current negotiation nor the original Grant was "entitled to diplomatic cognizance."<sup>22</sup> There is no record of Guzman Blanco's opinion.

During 1885 the dispute over the Venezuela-British Guyana boundary began to assume critical proportions. Since Great Britain's reputation for responsibility exceeded that of Venezuela, Price turned his eyes to this greener pasture, contending that, if part of the area claimed by the Price

<sup>20</sup> Apr. 29, 1885, Domestic Letters, CLV, 241.

<sup>21</sup> July 22, 1885, Miscellaneous Letters, July, 1885, II.

<sup>22</sup> Bayard to Price, July 22, 1885, Domestic Letters, CLVI, 385. The writer or the copyist must have made an error in the date, for this is obviously the answer to Price's communication of July 22. Both could not have been written the same day.



Grant passed into British hands, the obligation to compensate him went with it. He decided to approach Congress. But the task of tailoring a memorial to that body produced surprising results, chief among them the discovery by Price that his papers had disappeared from the Scottsville bank. He was furious. Nevertheless, the memorial was prepared and submitted to the Senate on April 19, 1888 by Senator John W. Daniel of Virginia.<sup>23</sup>

In the memorial inconsistencies appeared that must have puzzled the worthy senators, if any of them read it. Stating that in February, 1868 a company had been incorporated in Virginia with which the previous Venezuela Company was merged, no mention was made of the name of the incorporated American, English and Venezuelan Trading and Commercial Company. The petition was presented on behalf of the Venezuela Company, of which Price listed himself as president, as he had been. Yet the evidence supporting the petition was the *Vade-Mecum* printed to promote not the Venezuela Company but the incorporated company. Submitting a list of officers and directors, Price maintained that the Venezuela Company had been continuous although death had removed some of his associates.<sup>24</sup> One can but surmise that the Venezuela Company was resuscitated for the purpose of the memorial to give Price control of the enterprise once more and avoid dealing with the incorporated company, the whereabouts of whose president, J. Frederick Pattison, was unknown. Actually, he was dead but Price appeared not to know it; he insisted he was trying to find Pattison.<sup>24</sup> Point is given to this interpretation by the fact that, a few years later, Price greatly disturbed, insisted that AEVCO was the only company involved in the Price claim to which in 1868 he had turned over all his Venezuelan interests.<sup>25</sup>

Since the purpose of the memorial was to bring pressure on the State Department to intervene in behalf of claims, now against Great Britain rather than Venezuela, a fresh

<sup>23</sup> *Congressional Record*, XIX (4), 3115-3116 (Apr. 19, 1888).

<sup>24</sup> Price to Blaine, Dec. 12, 1891, *Miscellaneous Letters*, Dec., 1881, I.

<sup>25</sup> Price to Olney, Dec. 18, 1895, *ibid.*, Dec., 1895, II.

approach was undertaken in the shape of a memorial (1891) from Richard H. Musser of St. Louis, acting under a power of attorney from Price. Musser had also sought Congressional support and his memorial was sent to the Secretary of State through Senator F. M. Cockrell of Missouri.<sup>26</sup> This new petition passed over any mention of documents substantiating the Price Grant and concentrated on Great Britain whose "acts and attitudes . . . in these premises (the area of the disputed boundary) have been, and continue to be a standing menace to the success and prestige of his enterprise."<sup>27</sup> Protection was asked through the intervention of the United States.

Though this was the most far-fetched position yet taken, the subject had now acquired political, or Congressional overtones. In addition, Great Britain was a different target from that against which Price had directed his effusions for the previous twenty years. Under these circumstances a carefully worded reply was written by William F. Wharton of the State Department on May 6, 1891. He criticized the lack of substantiating documents. What were the rights of Price that Great Britain had usurped? There was nothing to show that he had been the "sole owner" of the grant. Obviously, the case was not in proper form for action. However, even if this lack was remedied, the State Department saw no ground to interfere, because Price had known the boundary between Great Britain and Venezuela was in dispute, when he accepted the conditions of the Price Grant.<sup>28</sup>

This reply sent the proponents of the memorial scurrying after evidence. Price had already inquired whether copies of the missing papers were on file in the State Department, filed there by Johnson. When this means of easy recovery failed him, he set about to get copies of his documents from Venezuela, with the Secretary's cooperation, provided Price

<sup>26</sup> Cockrell to Blaine, Apr. 18, 1891, *ibid.*, Apr., 1891, I.

<sup>27</sup> Price to Blaine through Musser, April. 10, 1891, *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Domestic Letters*, CLXXXI, 619.



would pay the \$40.00 cost.<sup>29</sup> William L. Scruggs, minister to Venezuela, undertook the research task in Caracas and Ciudad Bolívar in 1891. The result was completely negative. No records pertaining to the Price Grant were found in either the executive departments or in the Public Works Registry Office. Likewise, the United States Consul at Ciudad Bolívar had failed; no papers dealing with the Price Grant could be uncovered.<sup>30</sup> In desperation, Price appealed to the Venezuelan authorities in Washington, but he received no reply.<sup>31</sup>

It is no wonder that the papers could not be found.<sup>32</sup> As has been stated, the "conditions" under which the grant could be negotiated was an executive Resuelto of September 13, 1865, not a decree of the Congress. The "contract" which Price and his companions had used in their promotion was not the conventional contract drawn up and signed by both parties, but a copy of the "Conditions" countersigned by Ribas with an appended note authorizing Price and his associates to proceed with the enterprise. The only evidence ever advanced by Price that the contract had been ratified were statements of Ribas in his answers to inquiries and Dalla Costa's letter to Johnson. Not having seen the papers for at least eighteen years, Price probably listed what he thought they contained, rather than what they actually contained.

It is less easy to explain the disappearance of the private letter of Dalla Costa to Johnson, dated April 7, 1867.

<sup>29</sup> Blaine to Scruggs, Jan. 29, 1891, IV, 167; Blaine to Scruggs, Feb. 7, 1891; Wharton to Scruggs, Apr. 21, 1891, Instructions to Representatives in Venezuela, IV, Nos. 167, 170, 189.

<sup>30</sup> Scruggs to Blaine, June 1, 1891, Dispatches from Venezuela, XXXXI, No. 221. The Resuelto of Sept. 13, 1865 and the explanatory Resuelto of June 26, 1866 are available in the *Memorias de los Ministerios de Venezuela*.

<sup>31</sup> Price to Blaine, Dec. 12, 1891, Miscellaneous Letters, Dec., 1891, I.

<sup>32</sup> Price to Blaine, Feb. 4, 1891, Venezuelan Post Records, I, No. 170. This letter was enclosed in Blaine to Scruggs, Feb. 7, 1891. The papers in question were listed in Price's letter to Blaine, Feb. 4, 1891, as follows: (1) the decree of the Venezuelan Congress directing the minister at Washington to negotiate with Price in 1865; (2) a copy of the grant negotiated Feb. 6, 1866; (3) a copy of the decree ratifying the grant; and (4) a copy of Dalla Costa's statement to Johnson, declaring his arrival had fulfilled the conditions of the grant.

Although Johnson accepted it as an official document and it was so printed in *Vade-Mecum*, it may not have been so regarded by Dalla Costa. If it became a part of his private papers, it could have disappeared in twenty-four years.

In the preparation of data to satisfy the objections of the State Department to the Musser memorial of 1891, William M. Ladd of St. Louis became the chief actor. Ladd was a lawyer and, according to Price, a real estate promoter. As Musser's health failed, Ladd's influence grew until he became the attorney for Musser and by indirection the attorney for Price. In all probability Price did not know him personally, but the two corresponded at length. Ladd's memorial to the State Department was more extensive and displayed more hard work than any communication sent to Washington about the Price Grant. As Ladd explained to Walter I. Gresham, he was taking up where the memorial of 1891 left off; namely, providing the evidence for the assertions contained in the former.<sup>33</sup>

An imposing collection of documents bearing on the case had been brought together, consisting of a copy of the "Grant Conditions" which, it was claimed, had been ratified by the Venezuelan Congress on June 9, 1866; a copy of the Resuelto of June 26, 1866, and Ribas' letter to citizens of the United States describing the 1866 Resuelto as "a formal ratification or a supplement (if you like) to the Henry M. Price Grant." These papers probably came from what was left of the Johnson files. John A. Doll testified that, when a branch of the Venezuela Company was set up under Johnson, copies of the grant had been sent to him. Presented to Ladd by Johnson's daughter was a diary and the manuscript of a book. The latter is no doubt the "Johnson Account" used in this study. There was also a letter from Pattison to Johnson.

As many of the survivors of the Price venture as could be located gave affidavits of their experiences, among them John A. Doll, Salvator Barnesconi, Daniel Clary, and James

<sup>33</sup> Apr. 19, 1895. See foreword of memorial, Miscellaneous Letters, May, 1895, I.



L. Clark. From these affidavits much was learned: the names of passengers on the *Elizabeth* and those of the *Fairilee*, for example, and the later activities and fate of the Pattisons. The *Elizabeth's* passengers testified they understood that Dalla Costa had informed Johnson of the ratification of the grant. Two of them produced "passports" given them by Dalla Costa.

Another interesting enclosure was Price's affidavit, signed July 31, 1890, in which he declared he had never parted with any of his rights except to carry them out. Still another (Enclosure 3) gave power of attorney to Ladd (by Musser), declaring he was sole agent for operations of the grant. By virtue of his promotional work and money he had spent, he had acquired an "interest" in the outcome.<sup>34</sup>

What Ladd, Musser, Price and everyone else concerned wanted, of course, was money in compensation for the fortune that Price and Musser believed they saw in prospect thirty years before. Whether they saw Great Britain as the sole source of compensation is a question. Price, in a message to the Secretary of State, mentioned that the sale of the claim had been part of the plan.<sup>35</sup> In another he mentioned a syndicate which might be interested in buying.<sup>36</sup> Possibly, the idea was to entice the State Department to accept the claim as valid and then dispose of it before it was settled. It must be remembered that these were the years in which claims of both the United States and Great Britain against Venezuela were much in the limelight.

Gresham assured Ladd that his memorial would receive careful attention.<sup>37</sup> Hope must have been high for at least a month, but the memorial had the same fate as that of Musser's in 1891. Edwin F. Hill, Acting Secretary of State, informed Ladd on May 9, 1895 that the "so-called concession" was not a contract but a statement of conditions on which a contract could be negotiated. It might be assumed that such a contract had been negotiated; if so,

<sup>34</sup> Ladd Memorial, *ibid.*, Encl. 1-8.

<sup>35</sup> Price to Olney, March 23, 1896, *ibid.*, March, 1896, III.

<sup>36</sup> Price to Blaine, Feb. 4, 1891, Venezuelan Post Records, L, No. 170.

<sup>37</sup> Apr. 13, 1895, Domestic Letters, CI, 495.

its purpose was not a grant to Price as his individual property, but the formation of a company to promote colonization. The grievance of the memorial was not that the Venezuelan government had failed in its obligations, but that Great Britain had encroached on land Price claimed. This was not valid ground for action by the United States. It had been accepted without a stated boundary line; the existence of the dispute probably being the reason therefor.<sup>38</sup>

If Price and his colleagues had purposely pushed the AEVCO into the background to advance their cause, they now saw the error of their ways. Possibly, the Virginia stockholders were none too pleased at the news that Price had never relinquished any of his grant and that Ladd was the sole agent of its destinies. At any rate, Senator Thomas S. Martin of Virginia was sufficiently interested to inquire about the Ladd memorial,<sup>39</sup> and Representative Henry St. George Tucker, also of Virginia, asked the Secretary of State to produce the enclosures.<sup>40</sup>

Price then wrote a series of excited and distressed letters to the State Department. All of them arrived after the Ladd memorial had been denied action, but Price was under compulsion to explain himself. At one time he declared that Ladd was never his agent and he hardly knew him, although he had previously called him "friend."<sup>41</sup> He promptly tried to bring AEVCO into the picture. All his holdings belonged to the company, he insisted; if Ladd was agent for anyone, it must be for it. Senators Daniel and Martin and Representative Tucker had been looking after the company as a Virginia institution.<sup>42</sup>

Why he ever let it be assumed that the grant was still vested in himself, Price laid to the door of Richard H. Musser. Musser had written him in July, 1890 that it was

<sup>38</sup> Uhl to Ladd, May 9, 1895, *ibid.*, CCII, 130.

<sup>39</sup> Martin to Uhl, Jan. 14, 1896, Miscellaneous Letters, Jan., 1896, I.

<sup>40</sup> March 2, 1896, *ibid.*, March, 1896, I.

<sup>41</sup> Ladd to Price, Dec. 7, 1891, encl. in Price to Blaine, Dec. 12, 1891, *ibid.*, Dec., 1891, I; Ladd to Price, Apr. 17, 1891, Price to Ladd, Apr. 21, 1891, *ibid.*, Apr., 1891, II; Price to Secretary of State, Nov. 12, 1895, *ibid.*, Nov., 1895, II.

<sup>42</sup> Price to Secretary of State, Dec. 18, 1895, *ibid.*, Dec., 1895, II.



not necessary to say anything about companies in his affidavit. A statement that the grant and its privileges were invested in him was preferable. Whatever equities existed for stockholders were "matters between you and them."<sup>43</sup> He had argued with Musser over this very point; in fact, he had corrected the affidavit, leaving out the objectionable parts. When the final papers came, he had signed them without knowing what he signed, because he "was under the influence of liquor." A friend who was with him at the time was sure they had been different from the documents in the Ladd memorial. The bait held out to Price for this lapse from grace was half the profits in whatever transaction could be made. Ladd had been allowed to present the claims because he had possession of the documents collected.<sup>44</sup>

On March 2, 1896 Price sent an affidavit to Richard Olney, swearing that two of the enclosures of the Ladd memorial were fraudulent and begging that they be removed from the document.<sup>45</sup> That request was not carried out. What Price could not seem to comprehend was that the issue had been dead for almost a year.

So far as the State Department was concerned, the Ladd memorial of 1895 closed the books on the Price Grant controversy. However, the memorial was included in the informational material put before the commission appointed by President Cleveland on January 4, 1896 to examine the boundary dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela. When the State Department answered the request of Representative Tucker for the enclosures, it informed him of this and assured him that the material would be sent him as soon as it was returned.<sup>46</sup> Price must have received knowledge of this fact from Tucker; the State Department did not tell him. Spurred on by such good news, which was interpreted as a recognition of the grant, Price returned

<sup>43</sup> July 14, 1890, enclosed in Price to Olney, March 23, 1896, *ibid.*, March, 1896, II.

<sup>44</sup> Price to Olney, Dec. 27, 1895, *ibid.*, Dec., 1895, II.

<sup>45</sup> Affidavit in Price to Olney, March 23, 1896, *ibid.*, March, 1896, III.

<sup>46</sup> Olney to Tucker, March 11, 1896, Domestic Letters, CCVIII.

to the charge with undiminished zeal.<sup>47</sup> He assumed the presidency of AEVCO, since all the original associates had died, and was right back where he had started thirty years before in his contention about his claim.<sup>48</sup>

The United States Boundary Commission (commonly called the Brewer Commission) dispute between Venezuela and Great Britain, made its report in 1897. No mention whatever was included concerning Price and his claim in Guyana.<sup>49</sup>

In January, 1901 Price advocated force—the United States should take Las Tablas and Ciudad Bolívar. But he admitted that Venezuela could have a just settlement if she wanted it.<sup>50</sup> During the same year he wrote to Dictator-President Cypriano Castro of Venezuela, asking him to appoint a Venezuelan as a member of the board of AEVCO. He wrote also to former Minister of Fomento Ramon Ayala. Ayala replied that, if Price thought he had lands in Venezuela, he should appeal to the courts of that country. But, he added, if Price had the lands, he owed overdue taxes and, if he had not paid them, the land was surely confiscated. Price appealed to the State Department for aid in protesting the taxes, claiming that nothing had been said about taxes in the "Grant Conditions."<sup>51</sup>

Finally, on June 28, 1901 Acting Secretary David J. Hill achieved what his predecessors had only hoped to do—he stopped the Price correspondence. No action would be taken, Hill wrote Price. "This decision is final."<sup>52</sup> Price was deeply hurt by the cold, unsympathetic tone of the letter. He would not write again, he promised, and he kept his word. Rather pathetically he added that he had twice

<sup>47</sup> Price to Sherman, Jan. 25, 1898, Miscellaneous Letters, Jan., 1898, III.

<sup>48</sup> Price to Hay, Dec. 21, 1900, *ibid.*, Dec., 1900, II. The records of the Venezuela Claims Commission of this period have been thoroughly examined.

<sup>49</sup> *Report and Accompanying Papers of the Commission . . . [on] the Divisional Line Between the Republic of Venezuela and British Guiana, passim.*

<sup>50</sup> Price to Hay, Jan. 13, 1901, Miscellaneous Letters, Jan., 1901, II.

<sup>51</sup> May 18, 1901; Price to Hay, June 5, 1901, *ibid.*, June, 1901, II.

<sup>52</sup> Domestic Letters, CCLIII.



voted for McKinley and for Blaine, also, when he had stood for the presidency, even though he had lost friends by so doing.<sup>53</sup>

In 1901 Price was over eighty years old and living with his son in Jackson, Tennessee. He had spent four years trying to carry out the Price Grant and thirty-one years arguing about it—"even against the devil."

But the State of Guyana was no Eden for Confederate expatriates. There is no proof that any group of them remained in Venezuela. There may have been isolated cases of individuals who made permanent homes along the Orinoco; if they did, none of them kept the "national identity" that Price had planned as a safeguard for Southerners. Possibly, the failure of the venture may account for the scarcity of personal accounts. Moreover, the expatriates found little encouragement at home. Northerners were cool towards them and, even in the South itself, the movement was not smiled upon.

Causes of the failure of the enterprise are not hard to discover—it lacked organization, money, and knowledgeable leadership. Not only were the Price Associates unfamiliar with Guyana; they were equally inexperienced in the colonization process. But perhaps the most serious handicap was lack of money. Four years of war had prostrated the South. As Fred P. Derbyshire pointed out, few of the colonists had the money to establish themselves in Guyana and the Venezuela Company had none with which to help them. There was not sufficient money in the South in the 1860's to buy stock and Northern capital was not attracted by a project so frankly defiant of the victorious Union. The hope of tapping British money proved abortive.

Coupled with financial inadequacy and disorganization was a disastrous naiveté about Venezuela. The nature of its politics was thoroughly misunderstood; the description of its government used as promotion was contrary to fact. Southeastern Venezuela, the locale of the Price Grant, was

<sup>53</sup> Price to Hill, July 1, 1901, Miscellaneous Letters, July, 1901, I.

virtually unknown to the small groups of Confederates who attempted to settle there in the 1860's. Confederates visualized it "as an empire in itself . . . abounding in mines of gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, iron, coal, petroleum, quicksilver, and diamonds. . . ." They were basically correct, but neither they nor their contemporaries knew how to tap these resources. Techniques of engineering, mining, road construction, land management, and control of disease were wholly lacking.

Venezuela was yet to wait almost a century before its riches were to be developed into full fruition—and the dream of Henry M. Price to come true.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Recent explorations have found abundant natural resources in Venezuela—oil, bauxite, gold, diamonds, coal, asbestos, uranium, salt, and manganese are mined commercially. Iron ore is a major export, thanks to North American capital. The new town of Puerto Ordaz, at the confluence of the Caroni and the Orinoco, is where Price dreamed of placing his city. El Pao, near the Upata, where some of the Confederates tried to settle, has its Port of Palua nearby San Felix, the home of some of Waring's Confederate colleagues. And Ciudad Bolivar, still the gateway to the interior of Guyana, has a population of 50,000, far more no doubt than Juan Bautista Dalla Costa or Price ever dreamt. See "Land of Boundless Riches Still Undeveloped," and "New Towns Emerging from Iron Ore Development," *Venezuela Up-to-Date*, VIII, 12-13 (June, 1958), IX, 5-8 (May, 1959); and Luis R. Oramus, *El Caroni* . . . (Ciudad Bolivar, 1944).



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*Manuscripts*

Broadside: Venezuelian [*sic*] Land Co. This 2-page announcement contains the conditions under which the Venezuelan minister in Washington might contract with the proposed colonization of Henry M. Price. It is in the form of a letter from Alvares de Lugo, dated Sept. 13, 1865. To it is attached a statement, signed by Florencio Ribas, Feb. 5, 1866, declaring that Price was authorized to carry out his project. The second page is a promotional explanation of the project. It was issued from "Scottsville, Albermarle Co., Va., 1866." Copies are located in the National Archives, Washington (Henry M. Price to W. J. Wiley, Jan. 5, 1867, U. S. Dept. of State, Miscellaneous Letters, Jan., 1867, I), in Harvard College Library, Cambridge, Mass., and at the University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville.

Childs Family Papers, in possession of Mr. James B. Childs, Washington, D. C., grandson of Dr. B. W. Childs, a Confederate expatriate who died in Venezuela.

Frederick A. Johnson Account. This 61-page narrative of Johnson's experiences as leader of the first fifty colonists to the Price Grant in Venezuela, also includes his subsequent experiences and activities. It appears to have been written about 1874. The copy used was sent the authors by J. A. de Armas Chitty of Caracas, who received a copy from Manuel Aristogueta, "A native of Guayana," who in turn received a copy from a Mr. Higgins of New Orleans. The original of the Johnson Account was reportedly in the "Annals of New Orleans" but librarians and historians of New Orleans know nothing of the existence of this work. The Johnson Account checks with what little is known of Johnson's life and appears to be authentic.

Mississippi and Orinoco Co. Charter (1875), in the office of the Secretary of State of Missouri, Jefferson City.

Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith Papers in University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill. This collection contains letters by and fragmentary information about J. F. Belton, cousin of Smith. A search for biographical information about Belton proved fruitless.

Papers of Thomas S. Waring (1849-1894). Of the sixty items in this collection, eleven, May 9, 1870-July 21, 1870,

were written from New York and Venezuela. This collection and the circular issued by W. W. Legaré, Aug. 1, 1867, Orangeburg, S. C., are in the University of South Carolina Library, Columbia.

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